ABC

# Gardening AUSTRALIA

TV show
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Friday

February 2023

## SUMMER CARE for your CITRUS

## VISIT A BALCONY of botanical treasures

## Strike it lucky

*how to* TAKE CUTTINGS FROM ROSES *& other favourites*

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# welcome

There is something about the sight of a lemon tree in a garden that feels fitting and right to me. Maybe it's because most of the backyards of my childhood had one. Or maybe it's because the tree's form is pretty much the classic silhouette of a sturdy trunk, spreading branches and cloud-shaped canopy. Then there is the fact that the fruit (so outwardly sunny and inwardly tangy) contributes to so many flavour-filled meals. It's a trusty bon vivant of the garden.

Those lemon trees of my childhood were invariably big trees, requiring a certain amount of space in a backyard. But these days, there are some wonderful dwarf varieties available (including exotic hybrids), making them possible for balconies, courtyards and backyards alike. Regardless of size, now is a great time to give some extra TLC to your lemons, limes and other citrus to help boost your harvest later in the year. Jennifer Stackhouse has all the summer care advice you need, plus tips on some new and eclectic citrus varieties to look for, including those exciting dwarf varieties, on page 16.

We visit some extraordinarily talented gardeners this issue. In the Queensland garden city of Toowoomba, young gardener Caitlyn Mason has drawn on equal doses of instinct and research to create a cottage garden of old fashioned favourites – shrub roses, hydrangeas, geraniums and perennials – with a fresh and modern feel. You'll see what I mean on page 30.

From Caitlyn's country garden of frothy David Austin roses we travel to inner-west Sydney, and the balcony garden of self-confessed plant addict (and a favourite contributor to this magazine) Steve Falcioni. It's a layered mini-wonderland of intriguing and rare specimens, proving that it's possible to create botanical magic on any scale (*page 38*). And then there's the story of Michelle Filo in the Australian Capital Territory and her succulent garden, which is a heartfelt showcase of years of avid plant collecting (*page 42*). At the centre of all these stories is a passionate gardener following their instincts and pursuing the plants that give them joy. And that is what gardening is about.

Everyone loves a feel-good story – and we have a lovely planting tale for you here. Our horticultural editor, AB Bishop, recently visited Lady Elliot Island in the Great Barrier Reef to see first hand the revegetation of this former guano mine. This is the first in a two-part story on the island's incredible transformation into a wildlife magnet. Look out for part two next issue.

Whether your passion is indoor plants, natives, cottage beauties or edible delights, I hope you'll find inspiration in these pages.

Until next month, happy gardening.

Liz
**Elizabeth Wilson**

PHOTO SIENNA KUTASI

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FEBRUARY 2023

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A cottage garden filled with jewels
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HOW TO GROW CAULIFLOWER
TIPS FOR DRYING HERBS

Feast your eyes on our story about a rambling cottage rose garden in Toowoomba, created over the past six years (*page 30*).
**Photo: Hannah Puechmarin**

**PHOTOS** HANNAH PUECHMARIN, NATALIE MENDHAM, ISTOCK

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ABC *Gardening Australia* magazine acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and traditional custodians of the lands where we live and work.

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# February

News and happenings for gardeners and nature lovers

## CRACKING THE CODE

In a world first, scientists at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria have sequenced the genome, or the DNA 'fingerprint', of the golden wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) – Australia's floral emblem. This painstaking process took just over three years for scientists from the CSIRO and the Queensland Department of Environment and Science, among others, to complete. This is one of only a handful of other Australian plants whose genomes have been sequenced, including the macadamia, waratah and blue gum, and there are plans afoot to sequence the genomes of other native Australian plants, too. ►

**TEXT** SALLY FELDMAN **PHOTO** ISTOCK

FEBRUARY
11

**FEBRUARY 11 MARKS THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE. IT'S A DAY TO CELEBRATE WOMEN'S ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR, AND HONOUR THOSE WHO ARE AGENTS OF CHANGE. WHO KNOWS, PERHAPS A BUDDING FEMALE SCIENTIST IS SCRUTINISING A PLANT OR POLLINATOR IN YOUR GARDEN RIGHT NOW... UN.ORG**

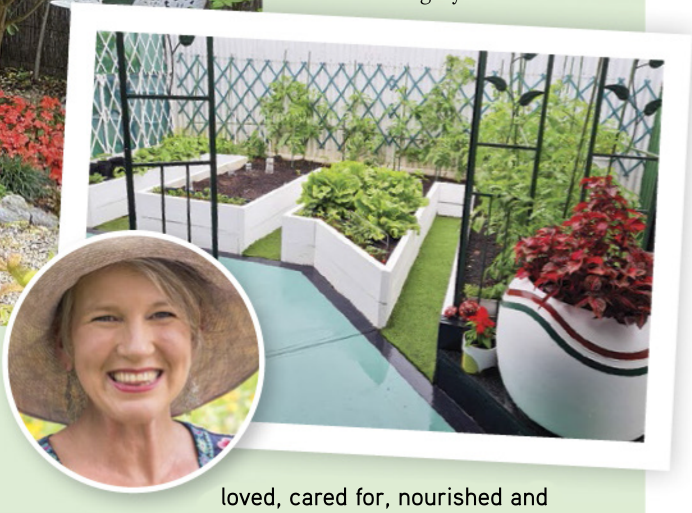
## WINNING WAYS

There's plenty of evidence that gardening is a balm for body and soul, creates connections in communities, and improves the world around us. Adelaide's community housing tenants recently showed off their creativity, innovation and skills in a friendly competition run by South Australian Community Housing Limited (CHL). Five tenants were awarded prizes for Best Front Garden, Best Rear Garden, Best Before and After, Most Inspiring Gardener and Best Vegie Garden. On hand to award the prizes was ABC *Gardening Australia*'s Sophie Thomson. "The gardens I visited were

## corridors of power

Linda Sparrow has been honoured by the Australian Geographic Society as 2022 Conservationist of the Year for her work leading a grassroots movement to restore and create new koala habitat in the NSW Northern Rivers region. In 2016, she and her neighbours teamed up to protect a 400m section of koala habitat in the Bangalow area, and the Bangalow Koalas group was born, with the aim to plant 100,000 trees by the end of 2025. Then the 2019–2020 Black Summer bushfires devastated vast swathes of the area's habitat and its wildlife. Undaunted, the group vowed to plant half a million trees in the same timeframe, creating a corridor north to the Queensland border, south to Grafton and west to Tenterfield. So far, some 215,000 trees have been planted, but there's still at least 90,000 more trees a year needed. And it's not just koalas who'll benefit; the ecosystem will also support and protect rainforest remnants and other native fauna, such as glossy black cockatoos, native bees and grey-headed flying foxes. To find out more, to donate, or to lend a hand, visit **bangalowkoalas.com.au**

LEFT AND BELOW
The CHL's Best Rear Garden award was won by tenant Lisa; Zsofi and Steve's vegie garden placed second in the Best Fruit and Vegetable Garden category.

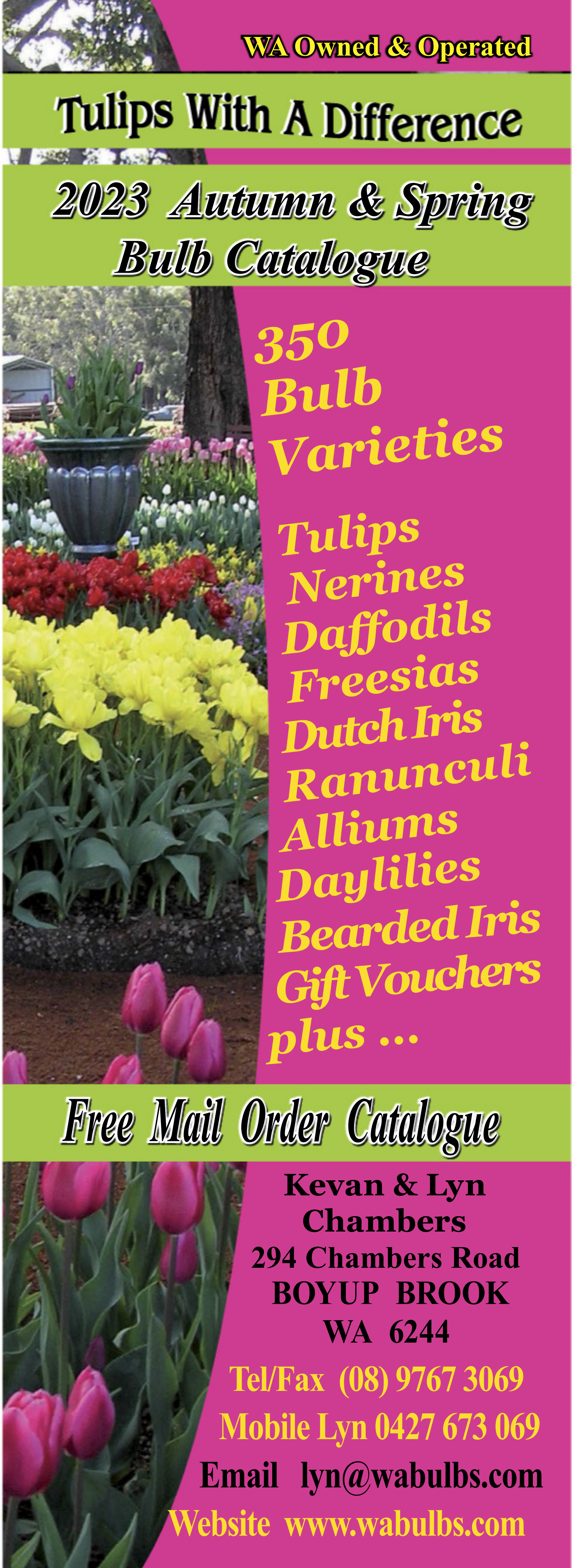


loved, cared for, nourished and inspiring," she says. "There was a diverse mix of styles, as individual as the gardeners who created them. What particularly impressed me was the thoughtful, creative, innovative and resourceful way these gardens have been established. Some tenants had been in their homes for 20-plus years and their gardens were simply amazing." Congratulations to all the winners. **chl.org.au**

## calling all keen citizen scientists

Populations of insect-eating bats in New South Wales are declining. Of the state's 34 endemic species, 18 are listed as threatened or deemed extinct. To help secure healthy populations of these upholders of the ecosystem, whose diet includes some of our least loved critters, such as cockroaches, mosquitoes and agricultural pests, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment launched Bats in Backyards. Citizen scientists can survey insect-eating bats in their vicinity by recording bat calls for up to five days with a device supplied by the Department. It's part of the NSW Government's Save our Species program, in concert with Western Sydney University and the NSW Department of Industry, and it runs until April 2023. Participants from Narrabri, Pillar Valley, Wellington and Western Sydney are encouraged to join up. Each will receive a report on the bat species they've detected, its preferred habitats and diet, and advice on protecting their nocturnal neighbours. **savingourspecies.online/bats**

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, SAUL GOODWIN, SOPHIE THOMSON, COURTESY OF CHL, JOHN LEMON



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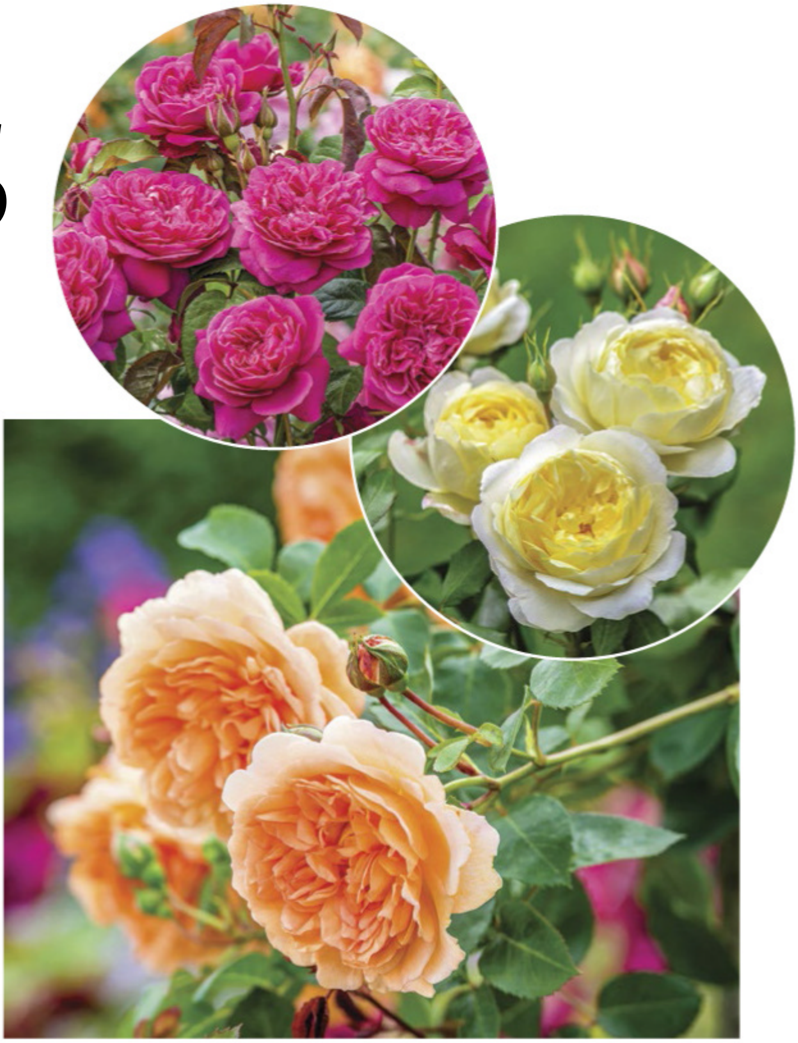
ON THE SHELF

# PLANTS

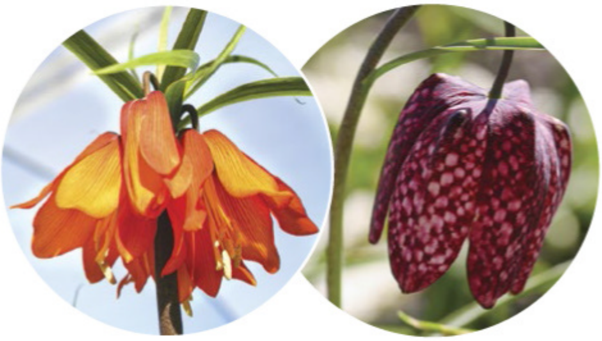
## A selection of vibrant flowers to add to your garden



Behold three gorgeous new David Austin Shrub roses. **'Dame Judi Dench'** (*right, below*) grows to 1.1m high and 1.25m wide. It's a vigorous grower, producing mounds of repeat-flowering blooms on arching stems that start as red-tipped buds, then fade from a rich orange in the middle to pale apricot at the edges. The scent is typically delicate for English roses of this colour. **'James L. Austin'** (*top*), named for David Austin senior's son, has large rosette flowers with a button eye, and a slightly 'fruitier' fragrance as befits such striking hot-pink blooms. It's a compact, tidy shrub, also repeat flowering, with an upright habit to 1.25m high and 1.1m wide. **'Vanessa Bell'** (*top right*) is named for the artist, interior designer and founder (along with her sister Virginia Woolf) of England's Bloomsbury Group. This bushy, upright shrub grows to 1.1m high and 90cm wide, and bears large clusters of creamy lemon to white repeat-flowering blooms. The scent is redolent of green tea, lemon and honey – something the outré Mrs Bell may well have sipped, back in the day. **davidaustinrosesaustralia.com**

TEXT SALLY FELDMAN

***Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue'** – aka Veitch's globe flower (or thistle) – deserves its place in the sun... literally! This hardy perennial is a dry-gardener's dream, not only for its drought tolerance, but also for its eye-catching display from late spring to autumn. Growing to 90cm high and 60cm wide, this clumping plant features deep blue-purple pompom flowers on rigid white stems above dark green divided foliage. Plant it to form a bold backdrop in a border, or as a counterpoint to 'softer' cottage-style plants. Cut flowers for vases, and you'll get a second flush. Split crowded plants to give away or replant. **lambley.com.au**



**Crown imperial** (***Fritillaria imperialis***) and **snake's head fritillary** (***F. meleagris***) are both spectacular bulbs for pots or mass plantings. Crown imperial (*above left*) thrives in well-drained soil and dry conditions. Growing to 1m tall on a single stem, well above their skirts of lilium-like leaves, each red-orange bell-shaped flower is graced with a crown of small, spiky green leaves. Snake's head fritillary (*above right*) is happiest in light shade. It has a purple snakeskin-like flower atop each slender stem, and strappy leaves. It grows to a diminutive 30cm high. **tonkinsbulbs.com.au**

ON THE SHELF

# BOOKS

### FLOWER PHILOSOPHY

**Anna Potter**
**Photography by India Hobson**
**White Lion Publishing**

A celebration of nature's bounty, this latest book by UK florist Anna Potter showcases 25 of her striking floral arrangements. The book is divided into seasons, with gorgeous photography, helpful information and advice to inspire and guide you to create bouquets, wreaths and floral installations all year round. It encourages readers to create original designs, without the pressure for perfection. Included are tips on sourcing flowers – bought, found or foraged – how to use colour, and arranging and pairing flowers. It also has a floral thesaurus and information about useful floristry tools. The seasons are based on the Northern Hemisphere, but the information is relevant to anyone wishing to create novel floral designs, wherever they're located. Available from 14 February 2023.

### WONDERFUL WASPS

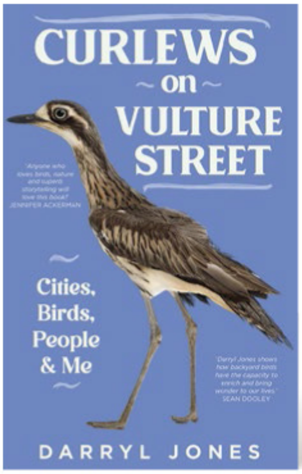
**Katrina Germein**
**Illustrated by Suzanne Houghton**
**CSIRO Publishing**

What do we actually know about native wasps? This beautifully illustrated children's book features a selection of different native wasps from the more than 12,000 species found in Australia. Along with lovely images, it showcases the beauty and unique features of Australian native wasps, their importance for pollination and insect control, and how even the smallest and sometimes least-liked creatures are important for our natural environment. Extend your knowledge with teachers' notes (aligned with the Australian Curriculum), which can be downloaded from publish.csiro.au.

### PLANT A TREE AND RETREE THE WORLD

**Ben Raskin**
**Illustrated by Rosanna Morris**
**Ivy Press**

Author Ben Raskin, head of horticulture at the Soil Association in the UK, explains the huge positive impact that trees have on our health and the world around us. He explores how trees help regulate the climate and absorb methane and nitrous oxide, enrich the soil, support wildlife and help keep the air clean in our cities. Included is practical how-to advice on growing saplings from seed or cuttings, grafting, care and maintenance, weeding, mulching and pruning, plus an informative guide to his pick of the 40 best trees in various locations around the world – including Australia. The section called *Trees and Happiness* demonstrates how trees also help to reduce stress levels and improve our mental wellbeing.



### CURLEWS ON VULTURE STREET

**Darryl Jones**
**NewSouth**

This engaging book, subtitled *Cities, Birds, People & Me*, explores how birds live successfully in city environments amid the noise, heat, dust, fumes, light and toxins. And they don't hide away – instead they appear unafraid of humans as they steal food (ibises), forage and mess up gardens (brush turkeys), and aggressively chase humans away from their nests (magpies). For 30 years, Darryl Jones, Professor of Ecology at Griffith University, has studied the many ways in which humans and wildlife interact. He tells of the curiosity, discovery, adventure and conflict taking place within our city streets and backyards, and provides rare insights into the lives of birds.

**TEXT** CAROLE GRIDLEY

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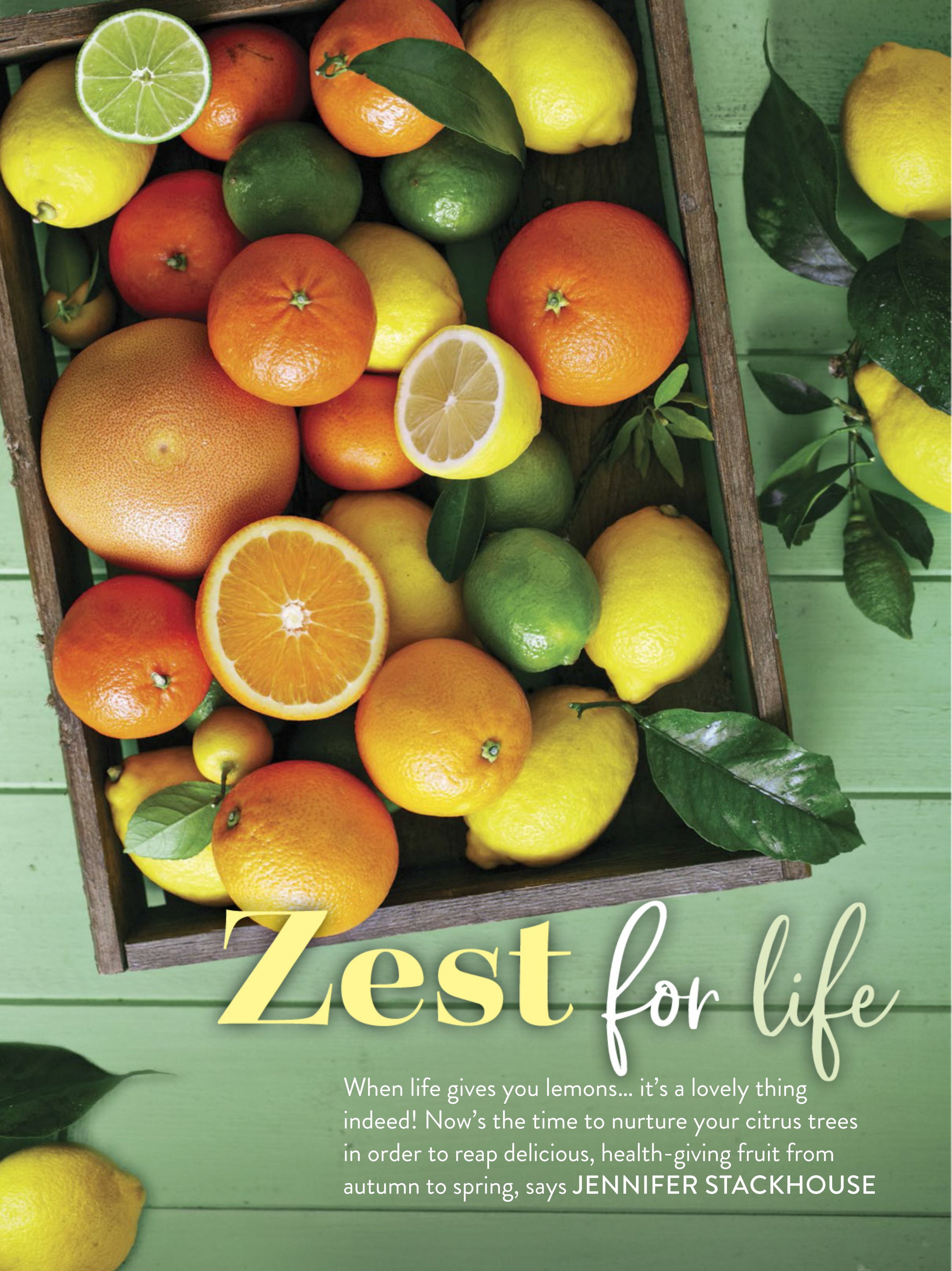


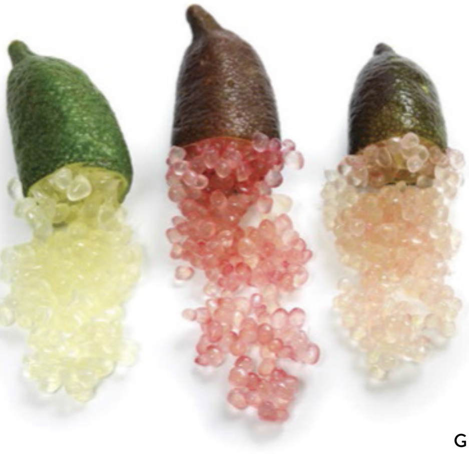
# Zest *for life*

When life gives you lemons... it's a lovely thing indeed! Now's the time to nurture your citrus trees in order to reap delicious, health-giving fruit from autumn to spring, says **JENNIFER STACKHOUSE**

There's really so much to love about citrus trees. They grow everywhere that's warm and sunny, look lush and handsome year round and, to top it all off, reward growers with tangy, juicy fruit that can be eaten, drunk or preserved.

Once it was the lemon that graced every backyard. While it remains number one in the citrus stakes, limes are now trending. The rise in popularity of the seed-free Tahitian lime (*above*) is not just because people want to have a slice on hand for a gin and tonic; cooks love lime juice for its fresh, exotic flavour, which works well squeezed over meals or in desserts.

Backyards are bursting with orange, blood orange, mandarin, grapefruit, cumquat and native finger lime (*right*), with its colourful fruit and juicy, caviar-like beads of flesh. This bounty of citrus is due to the availability of dwarf and multi-grafted trees. Dwarf trees, such as the ever popular 'Lots A Lemons', suit containers or sunny courtyards, and allow even a small garden to boast a mini citrus orchard. If you only have room for one citrus, try a dual-grafted lemon and lime.



PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK, ISTOCK

## summer care

This summer, show your citrus tree that you care by giving it the attention it craves. Start by weeding under the tree before giving it a deep drench of water. If it has been raining, check how moist the soil is before watering.

When the soil is weeded and moist, conditions are just right for a good feed, before adding an organic mulch. Citrus trees in the ground appreciate two feeds per year: one now, in late summer, and another in late winter. Any fertiliser is beneficial, but to give your tree the nutrient balance it needs, make at least one of the applications a complete citrus food.

Citrus food contains high levels of potassium (marked as 'K' on fertiliser packs) along with sulfur, magnesium, calcium and other trace elements that ►

help fruit formation and development. It's available in dry or pelletised form, or in liquid form, which is ideal for trees in containers. Potted citrus plants do best with a monthly feed throughout the growing season (spring to early autumn), rather than the two big feeds given to in-ground plants. Regular, even feeding is important for the formation of good-sized fruit and healthy growth. Whether you're using dry or liquid fertiliser, follow the recommended application rates.

Although citrus food is formulated for growing healthy citrus, it can also be used on other fruiting plants, such as tomatoes, as well as flowering plants, including dahlias and roses.

## watering tips

After applying fertiliser, it's important to continue watering citrus trees regularly as the fruit grows. If a tree lacks water, it may discard fruit or produce a crop that's undersized and dry. Citrus in the ground needs a deep watering once or twice a week (depending on local soils and conditions) and a well-drained spot so it doesn't get waterlogged. Check potted plants daily during hot or windy weather, and water as the potting mix starts to dry.

Erratic watering – including bouts of very heavy rain in late summer or autumn – may cause mature fruit to split, so get into the habit of watering regularly. Once the skin has split, the fruit is likely to develop a fungal disease before it has a chance to ripen. Oranges are often prone to splitting.

Use time spent watering to check for pests by taking a close look at the plant's stems, fruit and leaves. In summer, you'll most likely find scale and stink bugs. ►

**CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE**
Dwarf citrus varieties can be grown in pots, making them ideal for small spaces; easy to grow, peel and eat, mandarins are a popular choice; makrut lime is loved by cooks.

PHOTOS GAP PHOTOS/ELKE BORKOWSKI, ISTOCK

> IN COLD AREAS, GROW CITRUS IN THE WARMEST, MOST SHELTERED SPOT AVAILABLE. EXPOSURE TO COLD WINDS WILL LEAD TO POOR GROWTH AND A VERY SAD TREE.

## WHAT'S NEW?

There are many new citrus varieties to get gardeners excited, and old favourites now available in manageable sizes. Citrus trees can be planted anytime, but you'll need to water summer plantings well, especially in hot, dry conditions.

● **Dwarf red grapefruit** Grapefruit is one of the easiest citrus to grow, but traditionally, it takes up a lot of space. Full-sized red grapefruit now grow on a dwarf tree just 2m high. The fruit is good to eat and juice.

● **Dwarf Eureka lemon** This popular backyard lemon with year-round fruit has been reduced in size with dwarfing rootstock. It has reliable, juicy fruit on a compact tree 3m high. Also look for dwarf Lisbon lemon.

● **Makrut lime** A must-have in the kitchen, makrut lime produces lobed leaves and green, bumpy fruit that's good for zesting. Use the leaves and zest to flavour Asian dishes. It's also available as a dwarf tree for containers or small spaces.

● **Seedless Valencia orange** This citrus is a seedless form of the juicy, flavour-filled Valencia. The fruit holds well on the tree, giving tasty oranges from winter to summer. For small spaces, look for the dwarf form.

● **Sunrise Lime** This lime hybrid was developed by the CSIRO by crossing a native finger lime with a calamondin. It has small orange pear-shaped fruit that's tasty, great for marmalade and a talking point in your garden or a pot.

# PEST WATCH

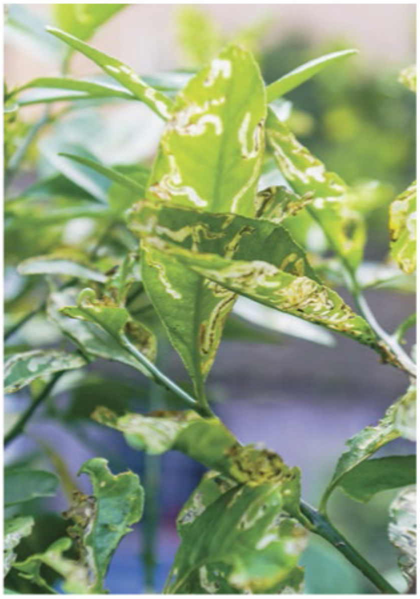
Summer is peak time for citrus pests, so keep a close eye on your trees and be prepared to take action fast. Look for scale on stems, as well as under or on leaves, or on the skin of the fruit, and check for stink bugs on small fruit or clustered on the stem.

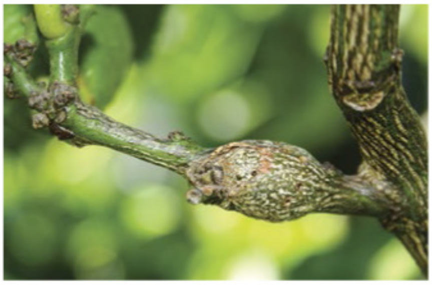
Two warning flags that scale is present are ants running up and down the trunk and branches, and signs of sooty mould, which is a black, crusty growth that covers the leaves. Clean away sooty mould with a soap spray, then treat the scale.

Scale can be flat or slightly rounded and may be black, brown, red or white. It can be removed with your fingernail or a soft toothbrush, but follow up with a safe spray such as a horticultural spray oil, which will remove the scale's waxy covering, leaving it to dry out and die. Scale on the actual fruit, which you may see on oranges, can just be wiped off before the fruit is eaten.

Ants farm scale by moving it around the plant, keeping natural predators away. Control the ants by banding the tree's trunk with a sticky barrier. If your citrus is in a pot, stand the container on pot feet and place the feet in water.

Stink bugs, such as bronze orange bugs and spined citrus bugs, mature in summer, sucking sap from citrus stems, causing the fruit to fail. Damaged fruit may look okay but can be dry or brown inside. Remove the bugs by hand, but take care to wear eye protection to shield against their defences (a burning liquid they squirt at predators). One way to do this smelly task – they aren't called stink bugs for nothing – is to use long tongs and drop the bugs into a bucket of soapy water. They can fly, so take care to avoid disturbing them, as you don't want them to take flight. Bronze orange bugs often congregate on the trunks of citrus trees in the heat of the day, which is a good time to capture or squash the pests.





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP & OPPOSITE**
Sap-sucking scale insects weaken citrus trees, such as this mandarin, and affected leaves and stems need to be sprayed with horticultural oil; lumps like this show citrus gall wasp activity; tongs can be used to pick off bronze orange bugs, which suck sap from citrus stems; silver trails and curly leaves are telltale signs of citrus leafminer; a grapefruit tree.

## curls & lumps

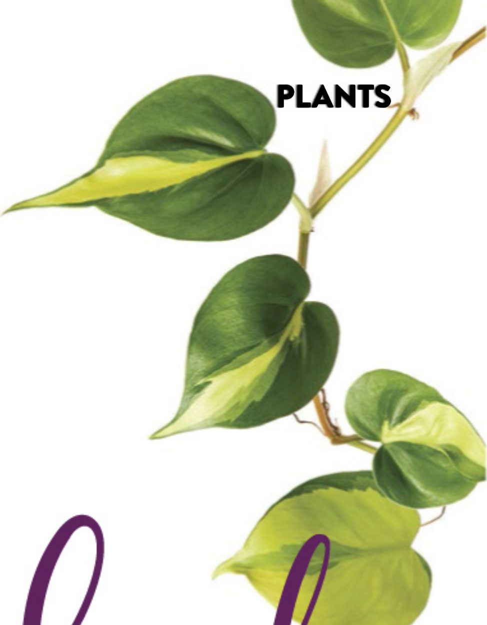
Another pest to watch for, particularly when the tree has a flush of new growth, is citrus leafminer, which many gardeners often refer to as 'curly leaf'. This tiny pest burrows through leaf tissue, leaving silver trails and causing new growth to curl up. Tip-prune damaged growth, then spray the next flush of growth with horticultural spray oil to prevent reinfection.

If you notice lumps and bumps on the stems and twigs, this is a sign that citrus gall wasp has paid a visit. This is a native pest that has spread rapidly to citrus trees in backyards across southern Australia. It does have natural predators, but the pest has spread more quickly than its foe.

Examine the lump on the stem. If there are no holes, it means the wasp is still present. Holes indicate that it has gone and the gall can be ignored.

Control this pest, which weakens the growth of citrus trees, by pruning off all affected stems before the wasp hatches (usually before late winter). Place the prunings into a sealed bag and dispose of them in the garbage bin. If pruning off all the lumps will result in the tree being skeletonised, and even open up the branches to sunburn, you can instead use a blade to carefully slice open the gall and expose the pest inside to the air. With good care, the tree will reshoot and recover from pruning. GA

**PHOTOS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATSKY, ISTOCK, ANNA HUTCHCROFT



# Lush & lovely

If you're seeking luxuriant greenery for your interior spaces, look no further than philodendrons. With their striking leaves and intriguing growth habits, they add just the right amount of drama, writes **TAMMY HUYNH**

When people ask what my favourite indoor plants are, philodendrons are at the top of my list. There are nearly 500 known species and countless hybrids, and the variety of sizes, leaf forms and growth habits is mind-blowing! Leaves can be small, large, heart-shaped, toothed, sword-like or deeply lobed, with a smooth or velvety texture in various shades and patterns of green, pink, red and orange.

Philodendrons, or 'philos' to their friends, are mostly climbers or vines, but a few of them are self-headers, meaning they have clumps of leaves that emerge from a thickened arborescent stem. Some species creep along the ground, too.

Despite their many unusual forms, they are fairly low-maintenance plants and will happily grow indoors without much fuss. Of course, there are a few exceptions, with some needing higher humidity and warmer temperatures year round, so avoid them if you don't want to put up with diva-like antics. There are still plenty of options to enjoy, but I suspect it won't be long until the 'high-maintenance' varieties make their way into your home – like they did mine!

## care & maintenance

Philodendrons (*Philodendron* spp.) are native to tropical rainforests of Central and South America, where they grow in the understorey, spending most of their lives in filtered light. This makes them great house plants. Philos grow best in bright indirect light, but some species, such as *P. erubescens* and *P. hederaceum*, are adaptable to lower light conditions.

Most species are happy with ambient humidity in the home, but those that have velvety textured leaves such as *P. gigas*, *P. verrucosum* and *P.* 'Glorious' prefer humidity levels above 60 per cent. Rare and highly coveted philos such as *P.* 'Jose Buono', *P. rugosum* and *P.* 'Paraiso Verde' require high humidity and temperatures of 20–30°C year round, otherwise growth is stunted and dieback may occur. You may need to invest in a greenhouse, heater ►

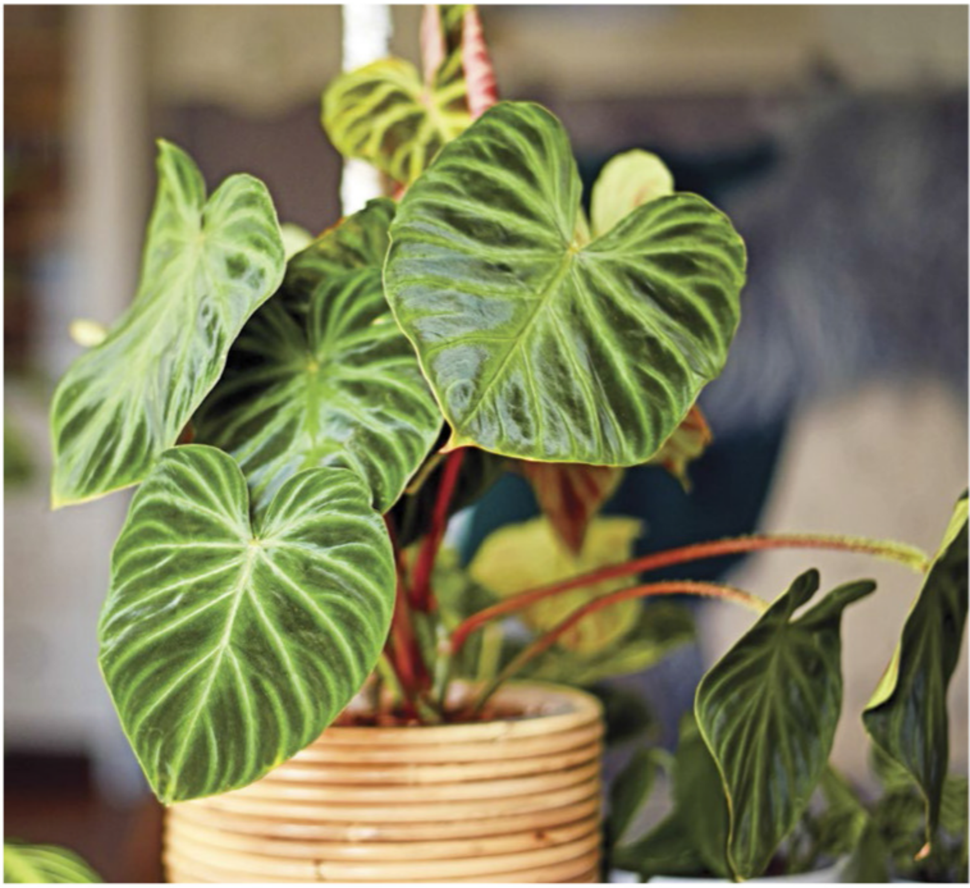
**OPPOSITE & ABOVE**
Tammy Huynh surrounded by *Philodendron* 'Brasil', *P.* 'Black Cardinal', *P. hederaceum* and *P. martianum*; *P.* 'Brasil'.

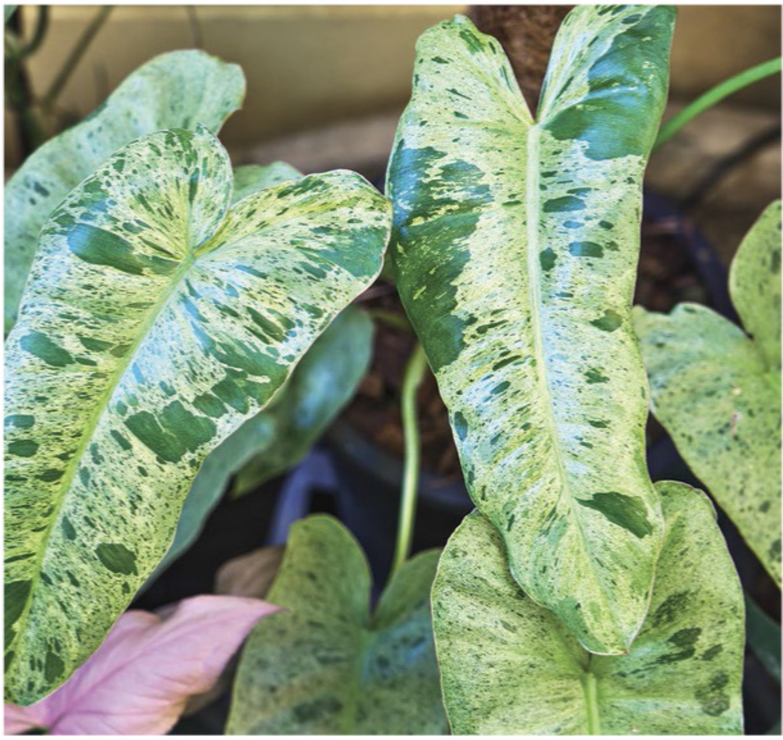
**PHOTOS** BRENT WILSON, ISTOCK

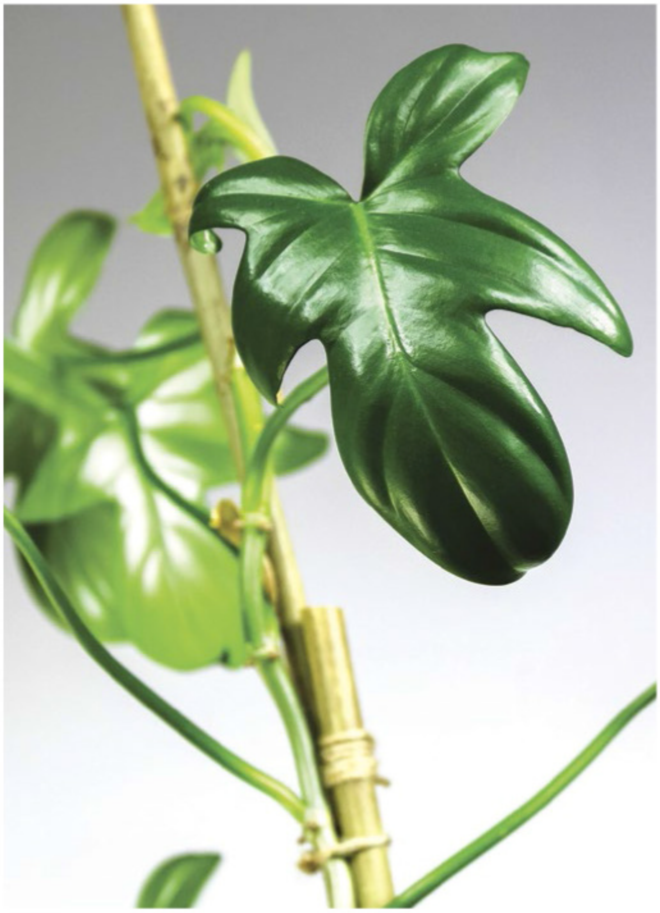
and humidifier to maintain these conditions. Alternatively, choose species that need less maintenance, such as *P.* 'Rojo Congo', *P.* 'Xanadu', *P. hederaceum*, *P.* 'Silver Sword', *P.* 'Birkin' or *P. bipennifolium*.

Philodendrons like a potting mix that holds moisture but also drains well. Most in-store mixes don't fit the bill, but you can combine a few different types of growing media – such as coarse orchid bark, perlite, horticultural charcoal, coir chips and coir peat – to make something suitable. My current go-to recipe is 4 parts orchid bark, 4 parts perlite, 1 part horticultural charcoal and 1 part coir peat. Otherwise, seek out specialty nurseries, which often stock their own 'aroid mix' that's perfect for philodendrons.

Thrips and mites are common pests and annoyingly difficult to spot. Signs of them include yellowing leaf edges, bronzing leaf surfaces or patchy discolourations. Spray thoroughly with insecticidal soap. ►







**PHOTOS** BRENT WILSON, ISTOCK

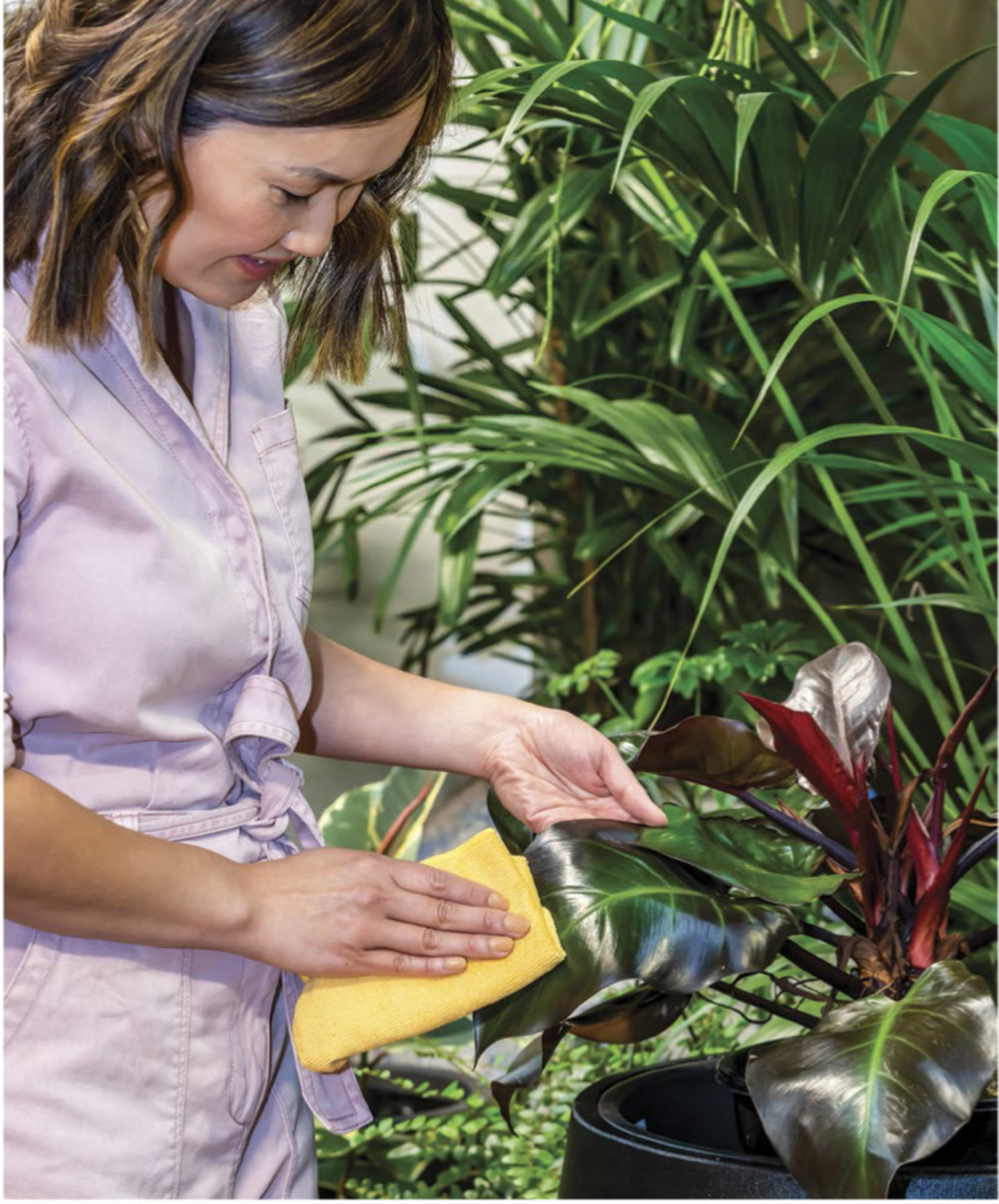
**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP**
*Philodendron verrucosum* has velvety, textured leaves; *P.* 'Paraiso Verde' needs high humidity and warmth; the glossy leaves of *P. pedatum*.

**OPPOSITE**
(*Clockwise from top*) *P. hastatum* 'Silver Sword', *P. martianum*, *P. erubescens* 'Pink Princess', *P.* 'Birkin', *P. lacerum*, *P.* 'Black Cardinal'.

# Tammy's TOP PICKS

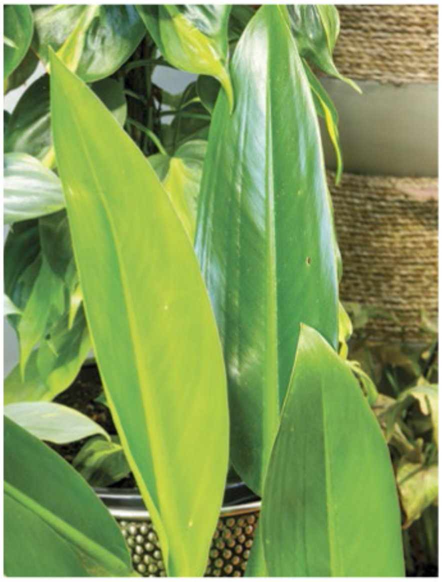
### *Philodendron* 'Black Cardinal'

This large-leafed specimen (*right*) is big on impact but low on maintenance. Leaves emerge bronzed-red and age to a rich dark chocolate, near black. Stems have a lovely red hue, providing a wonderful colour contrast. As a self-header, it doesn't require staking unless it becomes too top heavy.



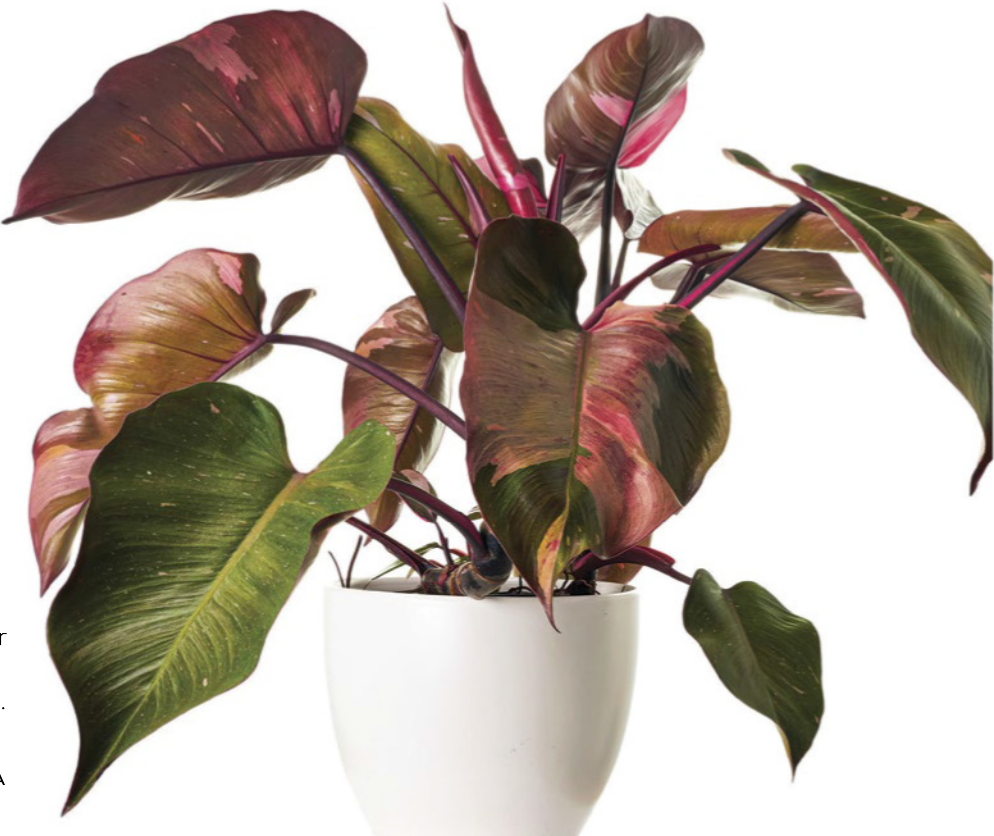
### *P. martianum*

Another self-header, this philo (*below*) slowly grows into an attractive clump with chunky, fleshy stems and smooth green leathery leaves. It's a great statement plant for a warm, brightly lit spot. Position where you can appreciate the thick stems, as the drama is lost if its swollen bases are hidden among other plants. It reaches 50cm–1m.



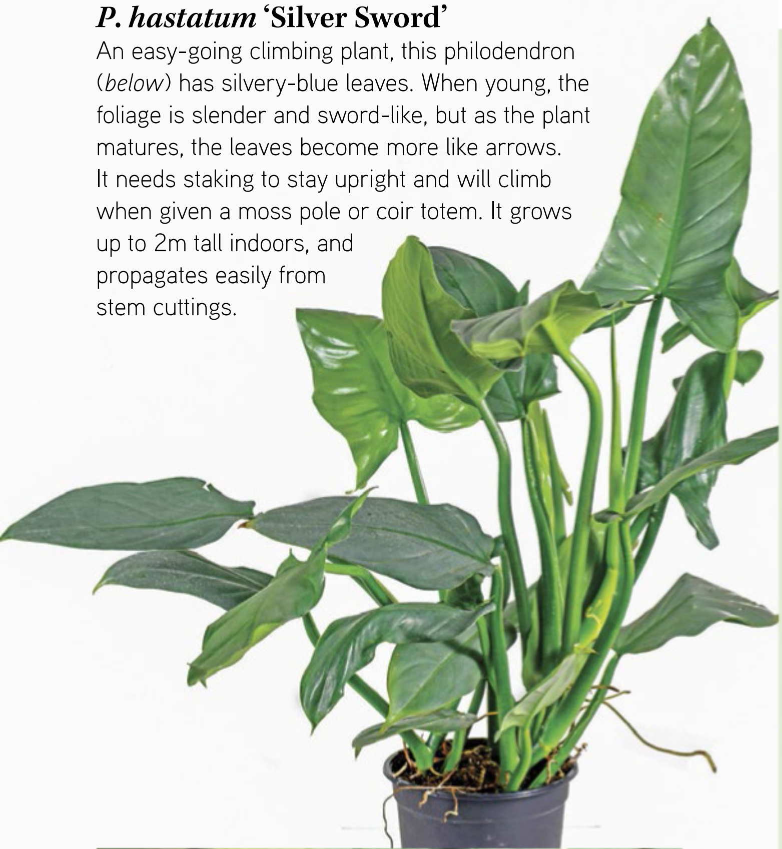
### *P. erubescens* 'Pink Princess'

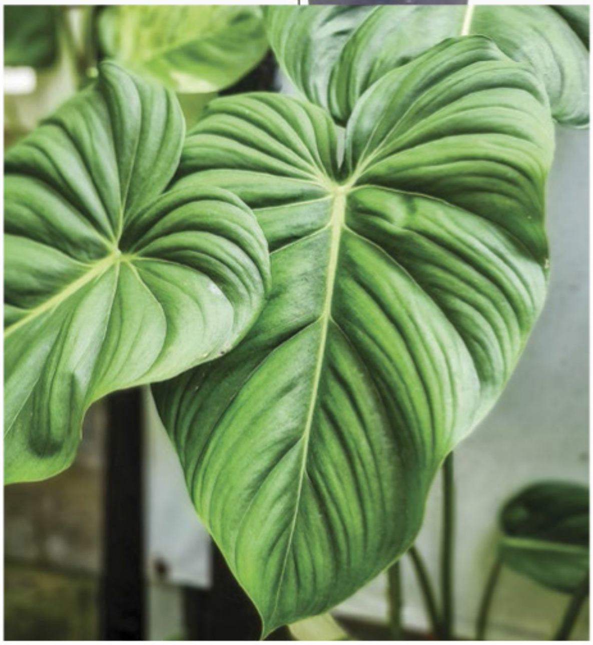
This is a striking variegated philodendron with green and pink leaves (*right*). The foliage is accented with specks, splashes or bands in varying shades of pink, and the stems are a deep pink-red, too. It grows up to 2m tall indoors, but my preference is to keep it shorter and bushier, so cut the plant back if desired. It needs bright light to maintain the variegation.



### *P. hastatum* 'Silver Sword'

An easy-going climbing plant, this philodendron (*below*) has silvery-blue leaves. When young, the foliage is slender and sword-like, but as the plant matures, the leaves become more like arrows. It needs staking to stay upright and will climb when given a moss pole or coir totem. It grows up to 2m tall indoors, and propagates easily from stem cuttings.





### *P. pastazanum*

This is one of my favourite philodendrons, with lustrous heart-shaped leaves growing more than 30cm in diameter (*above*). The deep green foliage is ribbed with contrasting creamy-white venations. It's a creeper, but the rhizome – technically an underground stem – sits on top of the soil or growing medium, where it grows horizontally while sending up new leaves. It grows well in a pot or trough. GA

**PHOTOS** BRENT WILSON, ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

## HOW TO **PROPAGATE PHILODENDRONS**

Due to their varied growth habits, philodendrons can be propagated in several different ways. I've had great success with the following two methods:

### CUTTINGS IN WATER

Vining and climbing philodendrons readily strike from stem cuttings. Take a 10–15cm cutting and remove the foliage, except for two leaves at the tip of the cutting. Place in a glass of water, ensuring at least one node is submerged. Position in a warm spot out of direct sunlight and replace water weekly. Over the next 6–8 weeks, roots will develop; once they are 5–10cm long, pot them up into a well-drained mix and water with a seaweed solution.

### AIR LAYERING

This works best with climbing philodendrons. Air layering encourages root growth at the nodes while the stem's still attached to the parent. The rooted stem is cut and potted up.

Place moistened sphagnum moss around a node, then secure with plastic wrap. This keeps the moss moist and promotes root growth. Once roots are poking through the moss, cut the stem beneath the rooted node, pot it up in a suitable mix and water in with a seaweed solution.

### where to BUY

**You'll find a variety of philodendrons at your local garden centre. For rarer species, try:**

- **Odd Spot Plants** oddspotplants.com.au
- **Plant Collector Melbourne** plantcollectormelbourne.com
- **Root'd Plants** rootdplants.com.au

# Butterfly beacon

This small tree packs a pretty pink punch in summer, and is one of the most versatile subtropical and tropical rainforest trees, writes **CLAIRE BICKLE**

Little evodia (*Melicope rubra*) really is the whole package! I love it so much that I have three growing in various spots around my Brisbane garden. It's fast growing, has a neat, rounded and dense habit, and glossy green trifoliate leaves, which provide shade and a safe nesting environment for small birds. Its common name references one of the tree's former botanical names, *Evodiella muelleri*.

One of the interesting features of the tree is that its vibrant lolly-pink flowers are directly attached to the trunk and stems. This unusual trait, called cauliflory, is seen on some rainforest species. Each cluster is about 3cm across, but as there are so many hugging the branches when in full flower, it looks as if its colour is lit from within the shrub. A variety called 'Blush' has much darker cerise blooms.

The flowers appear for several weeks during summer, until they are eventually replaced with clusters of aromatic, pale green, textured fruit containing small black seeds. The fruit is similar in appearance to small, knobbly lemons or limes, which provides a clue to the family the plant is a member of. Yes, little evodia is in the Rutaceae family, which makes it a relative of the citrus clan and other native plants such as correa and boronia.

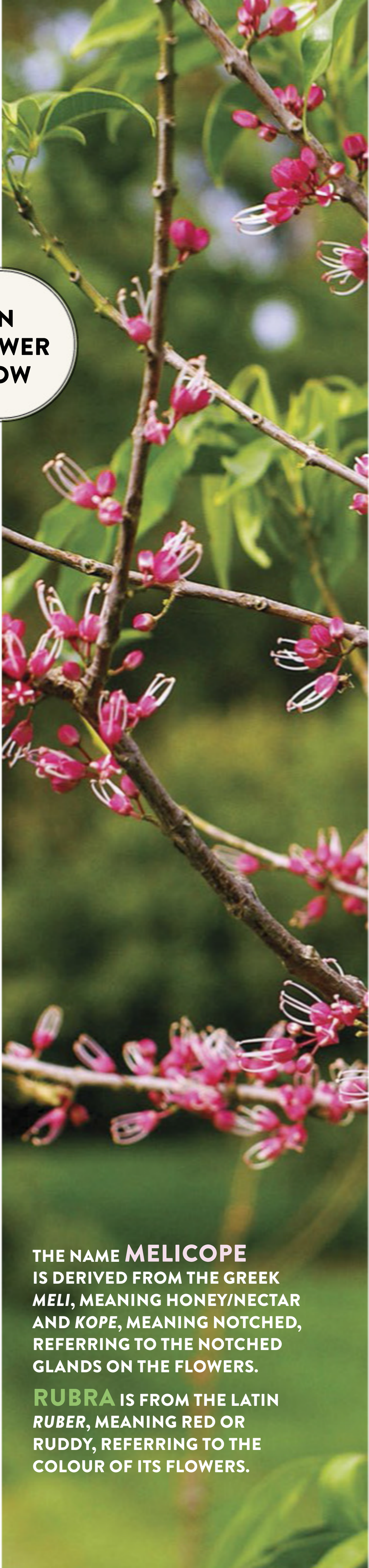
Little evodia grows naturally in tropical and subtropical lowland and highland rainforest areas, from Iron Range on the Cape York Peninsula, down to the Atherton Tableland in Far North Queensland. It's found in Papua New Guinea too. However, this adaptable plant will grow as far south as the Central Coast of New South Wales. It will tolerate light frost once established, but heavy frosts are likely to be lethal.

In subtropical to tropical climates, it's an easy-care, fast-growing plant. It grows best in sun to semi-shade, and thrives in a free-draining, humus-rich organic soil, although it will tolerate other soils that have been improved with compost.

During times of drought, adequate water is needed to keep the little evodia looking its best. If it doesn't get enough, it will certainly object by dropping its leaves.

Fertilise in early spring and again in summer with an organic fertiliser that's suitable for native plants. Little if any pruning is required – but it should still be considered for reducing height, shaping or even under-pruning to create a small tree canopy effect.

A rainforest species of a manageable size, little evodia makes a show-stopping screening plant, a feature shade tree (remove the lower branches to expose



**IN FLOWER NOW**

**THE NAME MELICOPE IS DERIVED FROM THE GREEK *MELI*, MEANING HONEY/NECTAR AND *KOPE*, MEANING NOTCHED, REFERRING TO THE NOTCHED GLANDS ON THE FLOWERS.**

**RUBRA IS FROM THE LATIN *RUBER*, MEANING RED OR RUDDY, REFERRING TO THE COLOUR OF ITS FLOWERS.**

PHOTO ALAMY

the trunk) or a background shrub in a large garden bed. It's perfectly suited to rainforest-style gardens, and is great for attracting butterflies.

This plant marries perfectly with a variety of rainforest and bushland species. There's a huge range of rainforest shrubs, palms and trees with which to combine it. Some of my favourites are scented daphne (*Phaleria clerodendron*), pink phyllanthus (*Phyllanthus cuscutiflorus*), *Syzygium* 'Cascade', native frangipani (*Hymenosporum flavum*), pavetta (*Pavetta australiensis*) and blueberry ash (*Elaeocarpus reticulatus*).

Little evodia also happily blends in with tropical exotics such as hibiscus, crotons, bromeliad, cordyline and gingers. Maybe surprisingly, it even suits a cottage-style garden, getting along well with favourites such as plumbago, magnolia, crepe myrtle, salvia, brunfelsia, roses and more. From a design perspective, the combinations are endless, which is yet another reason it's such a fabulous plant.

As if that's not enough to win you over, little evodia is a wonderful habitat plant that, at only 4–6m tall, allows a slightly closer appreciation of wildlife than taller trees. The nectar-rich flowers are a valuable food source for various honeyeaters, rainbow lorikeets, butterflies, bees and a multitude of other insects. If you're lucky, the tiny feathertail glider may even visit! Little evodia is a host plant for the blue triangle and Ulysses butterflies, whose larvae hatch and feast on its foliage. When fruiting, the tree attracts all sorts of other animals, including orioles, figbirds, satin and regent bowerbirds and ringtail possums. Although animals love the fruit, it's not considered edible for humans. GA

## at a glance

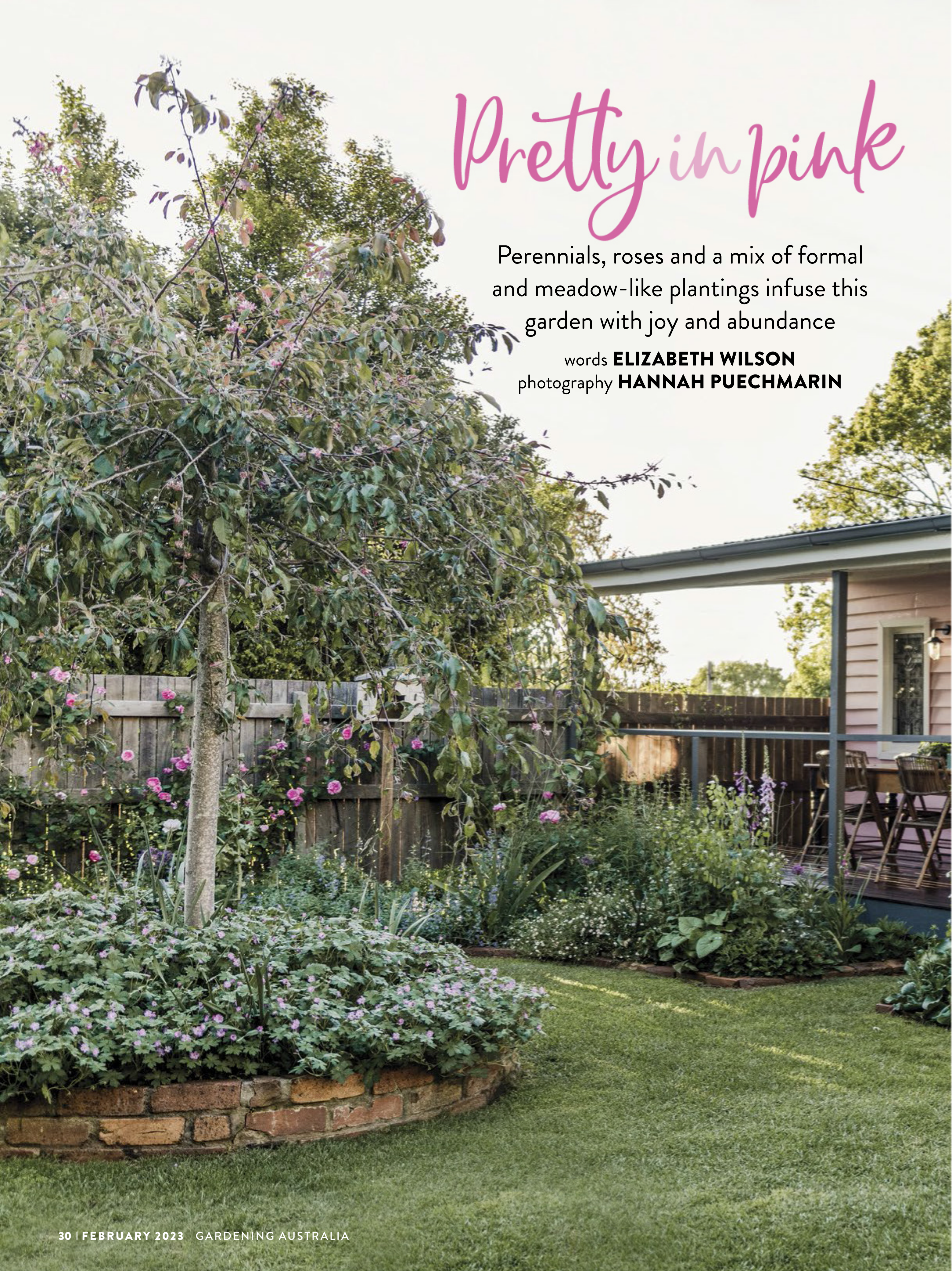
**common name**
little evodia

**botanic name**
*Melicope rubra*

**plant type**
large shrub to small tree

↑ 4–6m ↔ 4m
☀ ⛅ sun, semi-shade
✂ all year
✿ summer

🟩 suitable

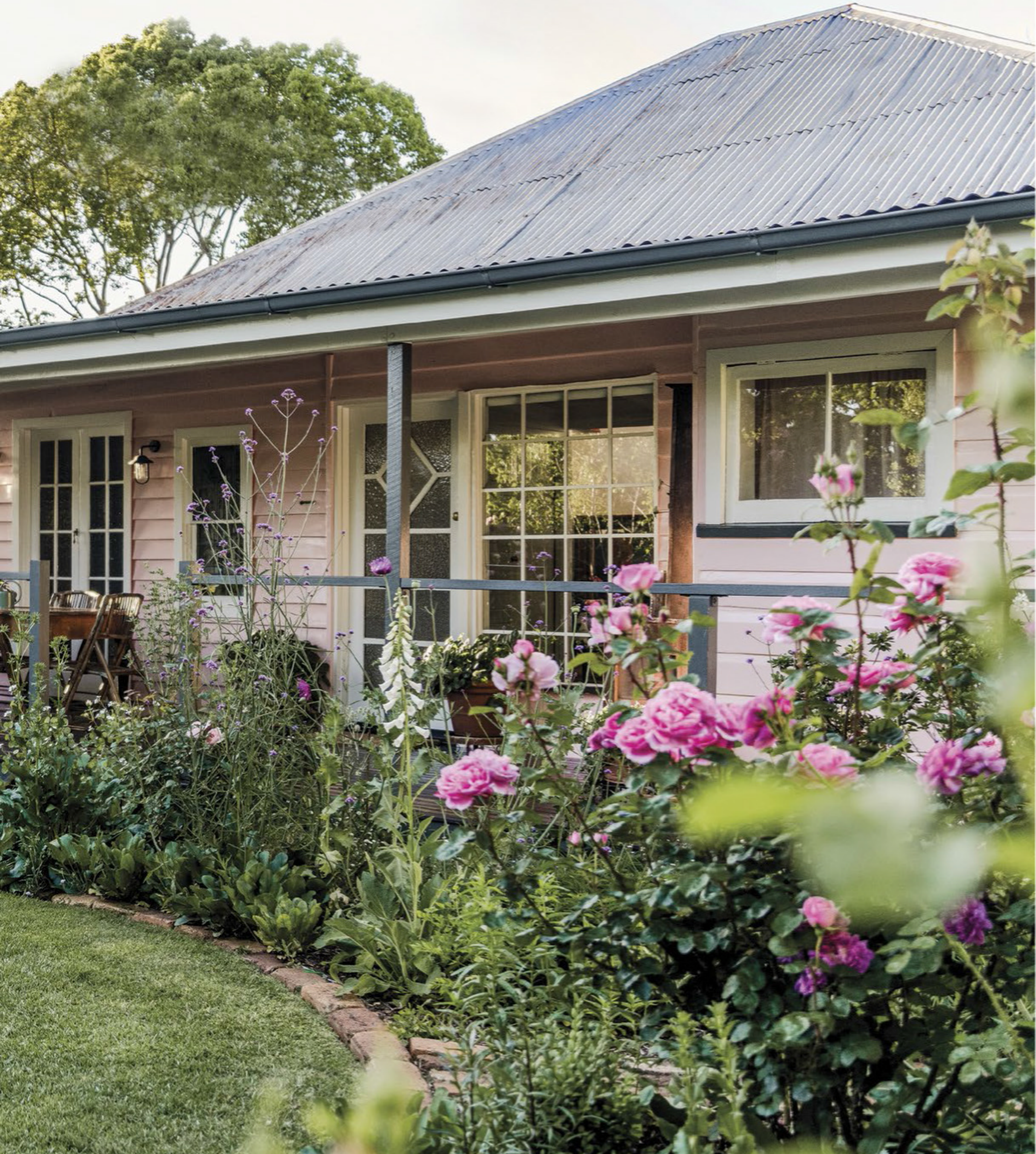


# Pretty in pink

Perennials, roses and a mix of formal and meadow-like plantings infuse this garden with joy and abundance

words **ELIZABETH WILSON**
photography **HANNAH PUECHMARIN**

Rambling plantings and formal elements coexist in this garden, reflecting the styles of its owners, Caitlyn and Sam. In the centre of the lawn is a crabapple underplanted with *Geranium* 'Mavis Simpson'. The surrounding beds contain foxgloves, nepeta, sea holly, *Verbena bonariensis* and David Austin roses 'Princess Anne', 'Strawberry Hill' and 'Radio Times'. Caitlyn and Sam painted the house pastel pink to harmonise with the blooms.



3
NORWOOD
ROSES

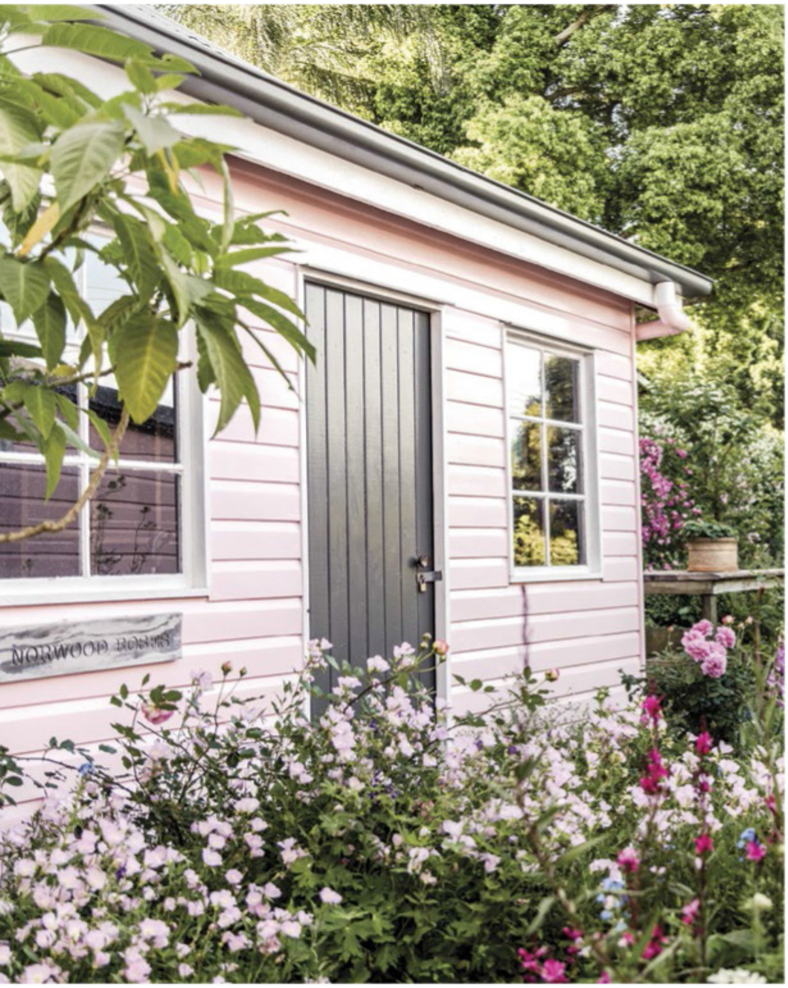
When Caitlyn Mason started gardening, she was given some crucial advice. "An experienced gardener told me that gardening was all about looking and learning. She said, 'If you don't learn something new every time you go out into the garden, you're not looking hard enough'. And I really think that's true!"

This look-and-learn approach has been Caitlyn's guiding principle in the making of her sweet cottage garden in Toowoomba, the famed 'Garden City' 125km west of Brisbane, on the traditional lands of the Jagera, Giabal and Jarowair people. It's hard to believe now, but when Caitlyn and her partner, Sam Clothier, bought this property in 2016, the only existing plantings were one weary tree and some weedy lawn. The pair was drawn to the history of the place – the timber dwelling on the site is a former corner store and residence dating back to 1897 – and excited by the 'blank canvas' offered by the 414m$^2$ block. "Because it's a former corner store, there is no front garden, but there was lots of scope for planting in the rear garden, which wraps around the house in an L-shape," says Caitlyn.

From the moment she set eyes on the property, Caitlyn knew she wanted to create a lush, rambling garden with pockets of meadow-like plantings. But first, there was some poor drainage to attend to. It was a sloping site with soil banked up around the house, so they needed to undertake some major earthworks – and this led to terracing the garden. "We created three levels. It came about by necessity, but it has given us three defined areas, and adds a sense of formality to the garden," she says.

And then it was time for the planting. "I started with hydrangeas, Hybrid Tea roses and salvias – nothing special," says Caitlyn. "I had some losses, but the successes kept me going and made me determined." What she lacked in gardening experience she made up for in enthusiasm and eagerness to learn. Coming from a family of gardeners helped too, as there was no shortage of advice available. ►

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**
Caitlyn with her little helper, dachshund Gertrude (named after famous late horticulturist Gertrude Jekyll), under an archway of *Clematis* 'Romantika'; steps lead from the rose garden (containing David Austin roses 'England's Rose', 'Strawberry Hill' and 'Radio Times') to the lawn terrace, which features two mop top trees (*Robinia* spp.) and a purple-leafed plum tree; 'Iceberg' roses at the front gate.



## CAITLYN'S GARDEN SHIMMERS WITH CANDY COLOURS AND SWEET SCENTS ALL YEAR ROUND.

The lower garden level extends straight off the back verandah. It consists of an oval lawn with a central circular garden bed featuring a weeping crabapple underplanted with the soft-leafed cranesbill geranium 'Mavis Simpson'. "I wanted the entire space to be filled with plants, but Sam wanted some lawn, so this is our compromise," says Caitlyn. Around the perimeter of the lawn are rose beds filled with frothy pink David Austin Shrub roses. "I changed from Hybrid Teas to the David Austins because I love that true Shrub rose shape," says Caitlyn, who nominates 'Skylark', 'Boscobel' and 'Jude the Obscure' as among her favourites.

Dotted around the roses are clipped mounds of Japanese box (*Buxus microphylla* var. *japonica*) and English box (*Buxus sempervirens*) interspersed with drifts of cranesbill geraniums (*Geranium* 'Rozanne' and *G.* 'Bill Wallis'), catnip, nepeta, forget-me-nots and campanula. "I love these groundcovers because they bridge the gap between the roses and the shrubs," says Caitlyn. "One thing I hate seeing is mulch!"

Around the corner from this lawned area, in between the house and Caitlyn's potting shed, is her densely planted wildflower 'meadow'. It's filled with rambling, self-seeded annuals and perennials, including cosmos, foxgloves, nigella, dahlias, nicotiana, echinops, asters, sea holly and *Verbena bonariensis*. It's a happy mass of colour and twinkling movement.

Up on the top grassed terrace there are more perennial beds, which are bordered by hedges and topiary. "The topiary is Sam's contribution. He does all the hedging and the sculpting. He likes the formal elements and I like the rambling elements, so it's a balance," says Caitlyn. This upper level also features a couple of mop top trees (*Robinia* spp.) and a Japanese flowering cherry. ►

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**
*Clematis* 'Romantika'; peony poppies; a pale pink 'Eyes for You' Floribunda rose mingles with candy-pink David Austin roses 'Boscobel' and 'The Endeavour'; 'Mutabilis' China rose; 'Iceberg' roses; the picturesque pastel pink potting shed is surrounded by meadow-style plantings including white evening primrose and red gaura, plus David Austin rose 'The Endeavour' and a brugmansia tree.

> “ROSES AND HYDRANGEAS ARE THE STATEMENT PIECES, WITH OTHERS CHIMING IN. THEY ALL SING TOGETHER.”

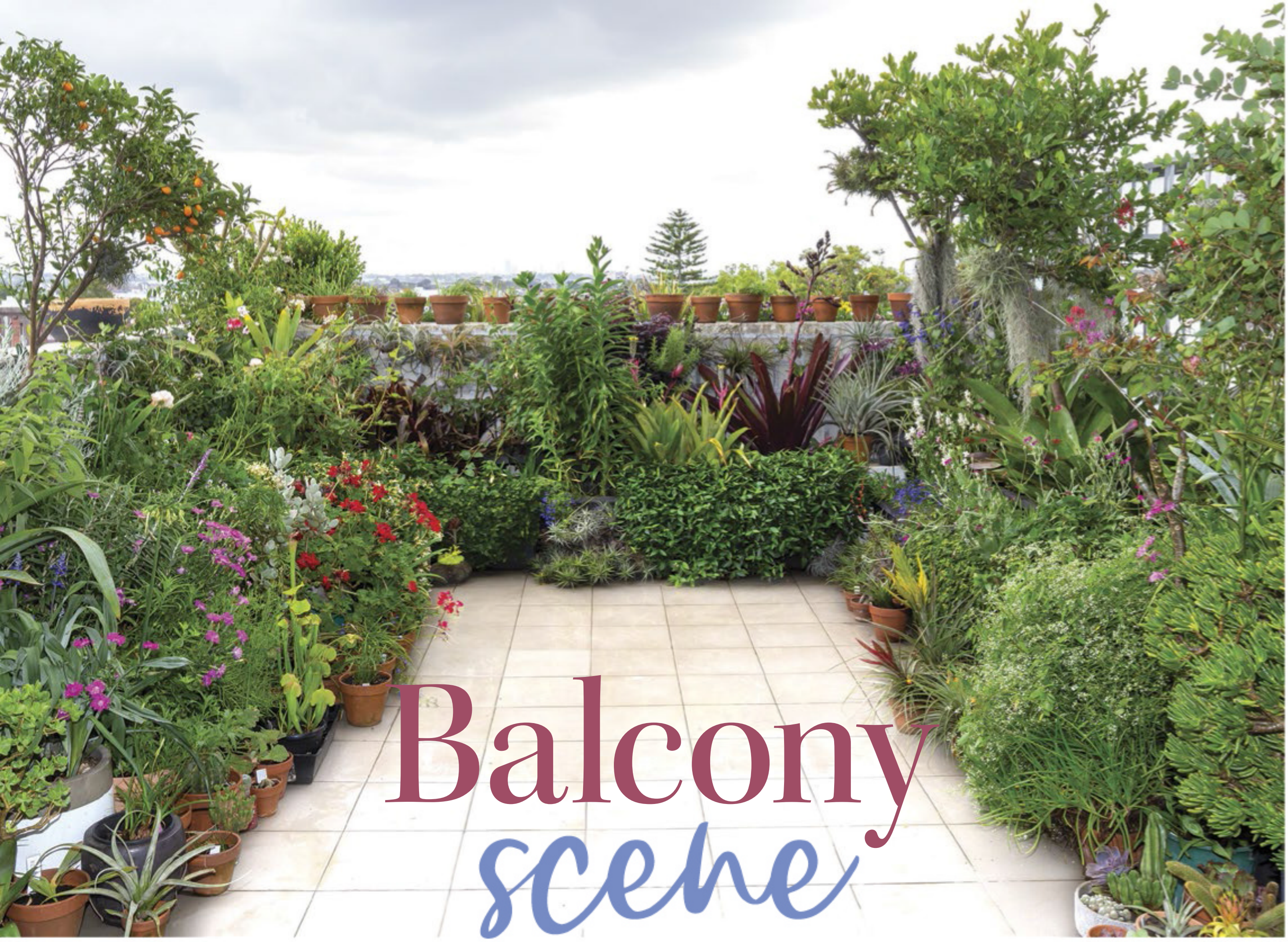
To tie the garden together, Caitlyn has scattered some of her favourites – such as foxgloves, forget-me-nots and nigella – through all three sections. She has also created cohesion through colour. “I’m very strict about my colour palette,” she says. “I generally stick with pinks, purples, blues and whites, but I’ve also added a little bit of lemon, with jonquils and daffodils in spring and sprinklings of the David Austin rose ‘The Poet’s Wife’.”

The garden shimmers with candy colours and sweet scents all year round. “I’m very conscious of planting for all seasons,” Caitlyn says. “There’s always something flowering, and it’s all layered. Some plants I’ll plant every year and some things self-seed, such as the nigella, primrose and *Orlaya grandiflora*.” While she enjoys every season, summer is especially sweet. “I love it when the roses are in full flush and the hydrangeas are flowering. They’re the statement pieces with lots of other plants chiming in. They all sing together”.

Caitlyn is constantly researching plants, reading books on the New Perennial Movement or listening to gardening podcasts, and has connected with growers globally through Instagram. That’s where she found a supportive community after she developed an obsession with dahlias. After buying tubers at a flower show, she connected with dahlia growers on social channels, became a member of the Queensland Dahlia Society, and now exhibits her beauties. She even hosts a dahlia-focused podcast (@quinceflowerspodcast).

Caitlyn loves seeking and trialling new plants (“I’m a bit of a collector”) and has become adept at editing and curating what works, and what doesn’t. It all comes back to heeding that early advice. “I love to look and learn,” Caitlyn says. “I probably stand around looking at my garden too much – but I adore it.”

**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**
A bee lands on a pretty geranium; foxgloves; a recycled-brick path flanked by *Geranium* ‘Mavis Simpson’, Japanese anemone, white evening primrose and a selection of David Austin roses leads under an arch of *Clematis* ‘Romantika’; David Austin rose ‘Princess Anne’; *Tradescantia* ‘Sweet Kate’; a lovely jumble of perennials including *Allium* ‘Purple Rain’ and nepeta, plus David Austin rose ‘Gertrude Jekyll’.



# Balcony scene

Horticulturist and keen plantsman Steve Falcioni has created a balcony garden that bursts with colour and year-round interest, proving size is no limitation when it comes to a love of plants, writes **TAMMY HUYNH**

Situated in an apartment block in Sydney's south-west is a modest-sized balcony garden filled with the most wonderful jewels. Numerous tillandsias festoon the boundary wall and kaffir, cumquat and honeysuckle trees elevate and frame the display, while myriad succulents, cacti, roses, bulbs and bromeliads anchor the scene. Measuring just 24m$^2$, the space is alive with texture and colour. Owner, horticulturist, self-confessed plant addict and regular contributor to *Gardening Australia* Steve Falcioni estimates he has "hundreds of plants squashed in here".

While Steve has had a long career in horticulture, his love of plants started when he was young. "My mother said the first thing I did when I learnt to walk was smell the flowers," he says. "But I suspect it had something to do with her being a gardener."

Steve has built up his collection over many years, and although it looks like he is addicted to a wide variety of plants, he's selective about what goes into his space. His favourites include roses, tillandsias, bromeliads and bulbs, but he is open to plants outside these groups, provided they hold his interest. "I like plants that change. It's boring for me if the plant looks the same all year round," he says. "I enjoy watching the life cycle, like with a bulb: it shoots, flowers, dies down, and the process starts again. That's part of the joy with gardening… the anticipation of the reward."

Steve's collection has waxed and waned over the years, but recently, he had to cull it severely when he downsized and moved. To maximise the size of his new balcony – without cramping the look and feel of the space – he layers plantings, with tall plants at the back, then medium-sized perennials, and smaller specimens to the front. And they're not all housed in pots. "It's hard to tell, but large UV-treated plastic troughs are arranged in a U-shape around the perimeter of the garden," he says. "They are raised on bricks at slightly different heights, giving the illusion of depth."

The garden is in full sun for most of the day, and exposed to drying winds, so Steve is realistic about choosing plants that will tolerate harsh conditions. "I'm a sucker for succulents," he says. "There are all sorts of forms, textures and shapes to enjoy, and they're easy and well suited to growing in pots and difficult situations." ►

**ABOVE & OPPOSITE**
Steve has created an oasis on his balcony with his collection of tough plants that are resilient to heat and winds; layering plants, with pots and plastic troughs set at varying heights, and taller plants set further back, creates a feeling of space and depth.

**PHOTOS** BRENT WILSON

> “THAT’S PART OF THE JOY WITH GARDENING… THE ANTICIPATION OF THE REWARD.”

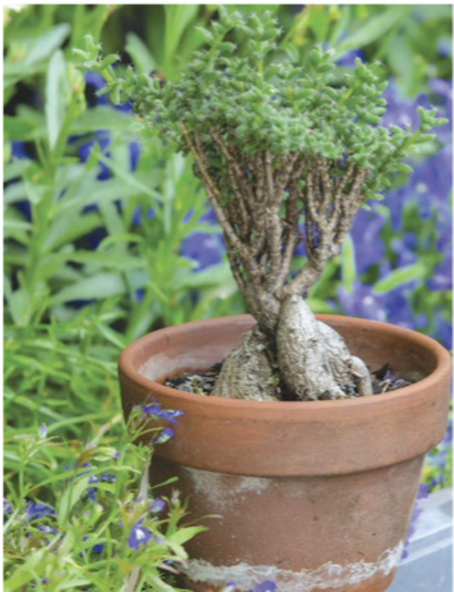
Bromeliads, including tillandsias, provide high interest but are low maintenance, and Steve is obsessed with them. “Many broms could be perceived as ugly plants,” he says. “They can be quite alien-looking and that might put people off, but I grew up inland where they’re not common plants, so their exotic nature appeals to me.” Steve says it’s the variety between the species that keeps him fascinated. “You can have things happening with different ones at different times of year, so even though it’s a wall of tillandsias or a mix of potted bromeliads, they’re all doing different things. They’re forgiving too, and I know they will be fine if they go weeks without water.”

One of the more exotic jewels is an African bonsai (*Trichodiadema intonsum*). It’s a caudiciform succulent with wiry stems that emerge from a thickened root system, or caudex – it’s a fabulous container plant. In line with the strange and wonderful, Steve says he is also “in love” with his *Eucrosia mirabilis*, a rare bulb that produces an umbel of yellow-green flowers with long, white filaments (stamens) that are arranged like a Victorian lampshade. He’s pretty proud that it has flowered twice for him.

It’s hard to miss the pops of colour in Steve’s garden but, surprisingly, they are not part of his main collection. “I do like little annuals,” he admits. “With a full and mature garden like this, you can’t change everything every five minutes, but the risk is that it can feel a bit too boring and same-same, at least for me.”

He uses annuals such as alyssum, linaria, Johnny jump-up (*Viola tricolor*), little viola, zinnias, lobelias and rainbow chrysanthemums to liven things up and create a sense of anticipation. He doesn’t follow any strict rules with them. “I just grab whatever I like the look of, shove it in and hopefully it harmonises,” he says.

Steve recently started acquiring plants within the *Streptocarpus* genus (including African violets), as he’s drawn to their showy, long-lived blooms. So far, he has six or seven plants living happily indoors. “I’m trying to decide whether that’s enough or if I can justify getting more,” he says. Given that he is a self-confessed plant addict, we suspect it’s likely the latter. GA

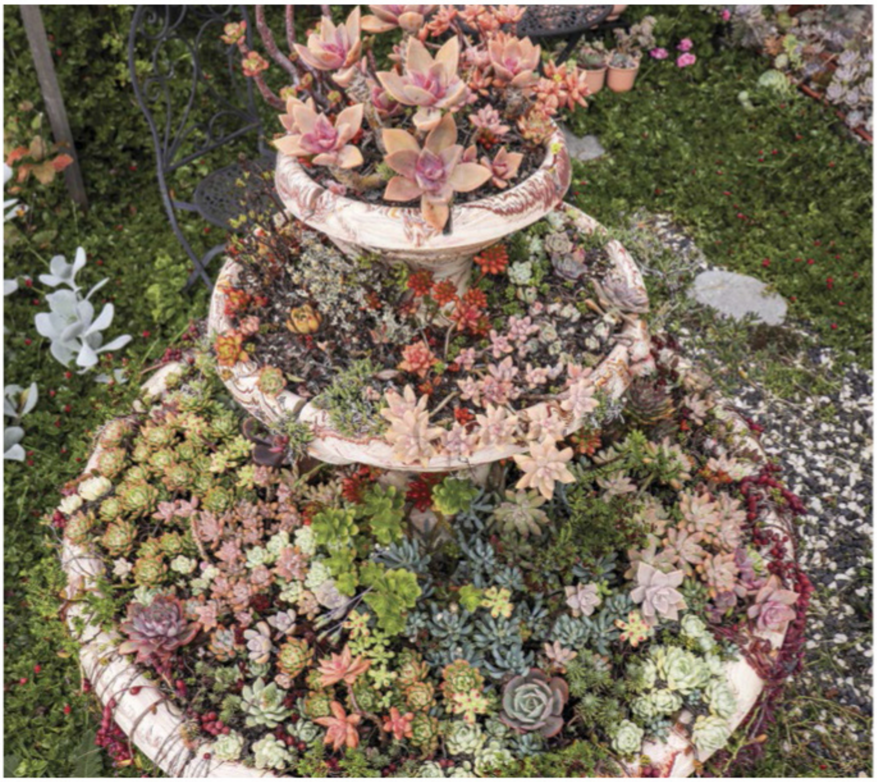


**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT**
Steve holding a *Ceropegia dichotoma*; a euphorbia in a colourful pot; some of the interesting cacti and succulents in Steve’s collection; a ‘Big Red’ geranium provides bursts of colour; tillandsias add interest and are great for a trellis; carnivorous trumpet pitchers; colourful crucifix orchids; the bromeliad *Aechmea maculata*; African bonsai.

**PHOTOS** BRENT WILSON

# Meet the gardener

This enthusiastic succulent collector has built up a spectacular display, despite the less-than-ideal growing conditions, writes **KIRSTEN WILKINS**



There's a fountain just inside the front fence of Michelle Filo's Canberra townhouse that is permanently flowing – only it's not water cascading over its edges, but colourful succulents. This standout feature hints at her love of these fleshy plants, but it's in her small backyard that the real magic happens. Over the past four years, Michelle (aka Mish) has transformed the bare 6m x 9m space into a succulent collector's heaven that brings her joy and provides inspiration for her many online followers.

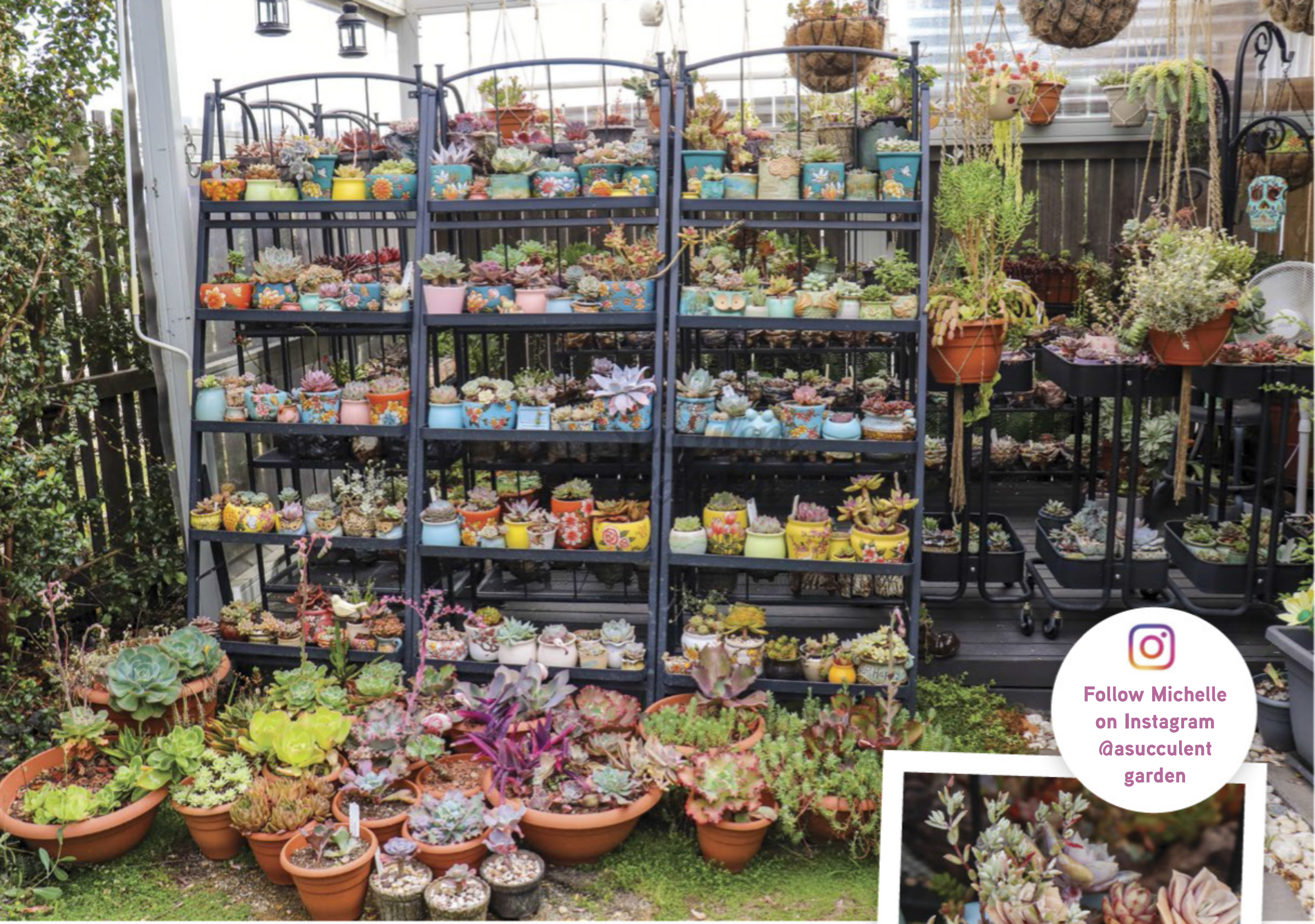
"I always loved the look of succulents – my first was an *Echeveria* x *imbricata* gifted by a friend – but I didn't purchase my own until 2018, when I decided I wanted a low-maintenance garden," Mish says. "I looked online and found an incredible variety of plants. My collector-self kicked in, and I suddenly had to *get them all*."

Mish's collection started with two shelves of succulents that she attempted to grow indoors. "Like many newbie collectors, I thought I could have succulents inside," she says. "With time – and quite a few casualties – I realised how much easier it was to have them outside, despite the sunburn and cold damage risks."

Now, she has hundreds – on trolleys, stands and shelves. "I've had to go vertical, too," Mish says. "Any pot can go up with a macramé hanger." Along with hanging pots there are succulent-filled birdcages and coir peat hanging baskets: "They dry out fast, but I like this option for plants that rot easily. If I have issues with a basket going hydrophobic (when the soil repels the water), I soak it in the tub overnight."

Many of her plants are kept in a pergola and grouped thematically. She keeps the hybrids (mostly pachyverias and pachyphytums) together, and arranges them primarily by the colour of the plants or pots. "I can't help but colour-coordinate!" she says. "I like things to have the same colour tone at least… If something doesn't go with the rest, I'll pull it out and replant somewhere else. Inside the pergola, I like to keep everything more 'natural' looking and let the plants do the colouring."

Sitting just outside the pergola is an eye-catching display that Mish has been



Follow Michelle on Instagram @asucculent garden

building up for two years. Succulents in colour-coordinated pots fill three large sets of shelves, creating what Mish calls the "wall of colour". She has a huge variety of pots, and enjoys sourcing them, but she always aims to match the pot to the plant's individual requirements. "Terracotta pots are great for plants that like to be kept dry between waterings, and plastic pots are good to keep the moisture in," she says.

Michelle has certainly set herself a challenge growing succulents in Canberra, with its frosty winters, hot summers and the extra UV light that comes with being 600m above sea level. "I've had all the problems!" she admits. "Some out of stubbornness, but some I can't control."

One example is the amount of shade the backyard receives. "Too much in winter, and not enough in summer," she says. "The wall of colour gets sun until 1pm in summer, and only bright shade in winter, so the plants do get a little stretched."

Frost is not such a problem here. With so many plants, they create their own ecosystem and keep each other warm.

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, COURTESY OF MICHELLE FILO

**FAR LEFT TO RIGHT**
Michelle Filo with a watermelon haworthia and *Echeveria* 'Pink Champagne'; the fountain planted with hardy succulents; her backyard has hundreds of potted succulents, with many displayed on the "wall of colour"; a novelty pot of *Graptoveria* 'Lovely Rose' and crassula.

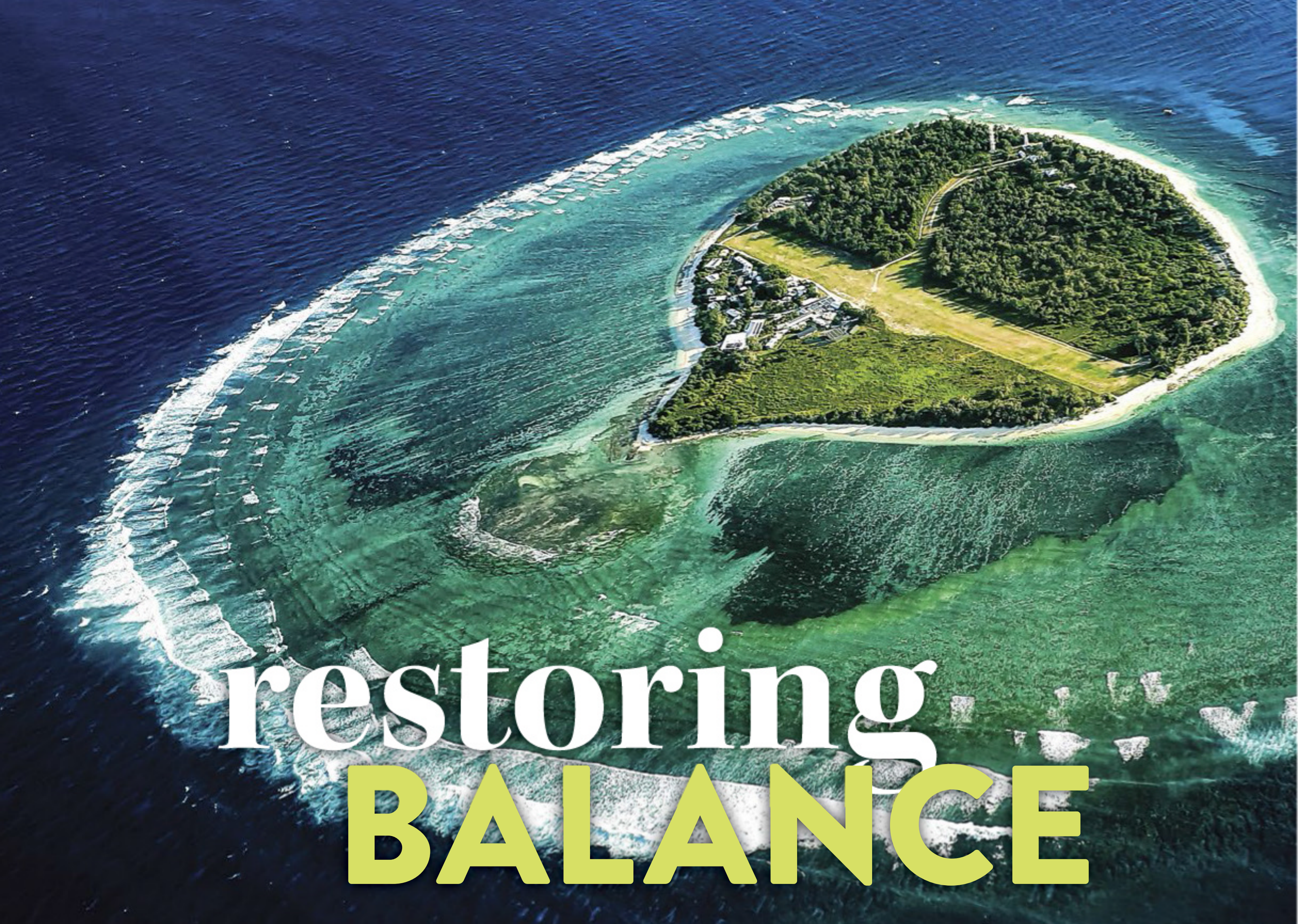
However, that proximity causes problems in summer, and extra ventilation is needed. Combined with the heat, it's the main cause of rot, so, to keep the plants cool, Michelle leaves a pedestal fan running and also hangs shadecloth under the pergola roof.

Michelle waters her succulents once a week in summer, in the evening, but only if the next day is forecast to be cool. During heatwaves, suffering plants are brought indoors, watered in the laundry tub and left to dry before returning outdoors. For most of the year, Mish waters once a month, spot-watering any plants that look thirsty. In winter, she doesn't water at all.

She also keeps an eye out for powdery mildew and other fungi, and uses fungicide prophylactically every month. She avoids sulfur-based fungicides in summer, as they burn plants when it gets too hot.

Michelle recommends fertilising succulents, but confesses that she doesn't. "Do as I say, not as I do!" she laughs. "The most I do is re-pot into a potting mix that has slow-release fertiliser in it."

So, what's next for Mish's collection? "I'm looking forward to new challenges, as I'm moving to Yarrabilba in Queensland, and taking most of my potted collection with me!" she says. "Moving them all is the first challenge; the second is swapping frost for a longer sunburn season… and humidity. Still, I feel so lucky I chose a potted garden and can take it interstate with me." GA



# restoring BALANCE

After a decades-long revegetation program, a barren former guano mine is once again a biodiverse haven. **AB BISHOP** shares the inspiring ecological rags to riches tale of Lady Elliot Island

Flying in a small plane over Queensland's sparkling blue Coral Sea, a green, reef-rimmed jewel appears below. This is Lady Elliot Island, a 42ha shingle coral cay at the southernmost point of the World Heritage Listed Great Barrier Reef and 85km north-east of Bundaberg.

As the plane descends, it becomes apparent that the cay's green blanket is actually a tapestry of flourishing subtropical flora. It's challenging to reconcile this verdancy with the windswept moonscape scenes in historical photos, where one can see from one side of the island to the other.

Landing smoothly on the grass runway, the plane rolls to a gentle stop near a shady *Pisonia grandis* forest. On arrival, visitors are greeted by a cacophony of what must be a million seabirds zooming every which way during their annual vacay to make yet more seabirds.

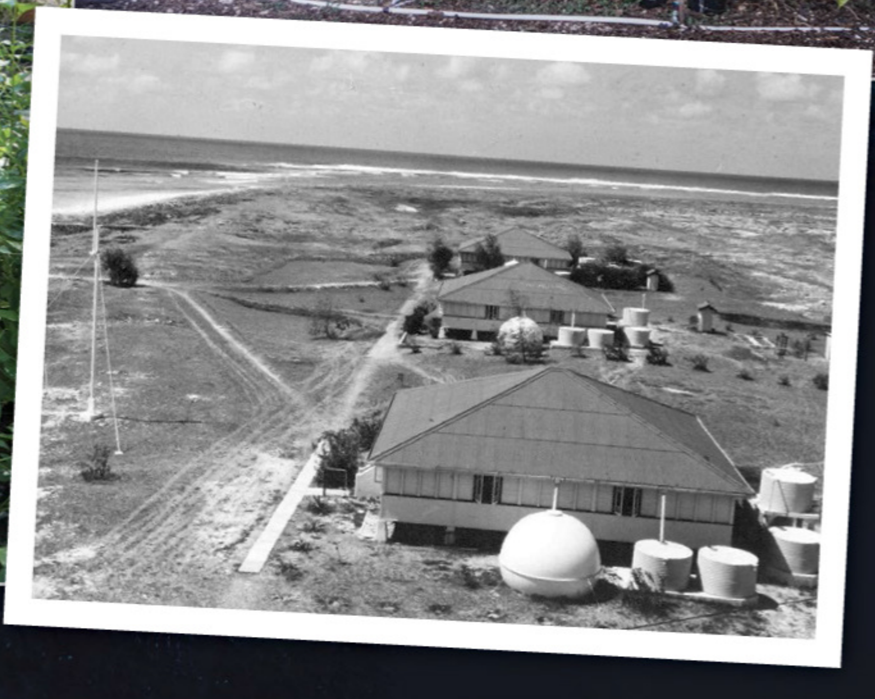
The cay's drab-to-fab makeover began in 1969, when visionary Don Adams, an aviator and conservationist, became the island's first leaseholder, building an airstrip and tourist accommodation. He had the foresight to begin revegetating with native plant material, such as the coastal she-oak (*Casuarina equisetifolia* subsp. *incana*) from nearby islands.

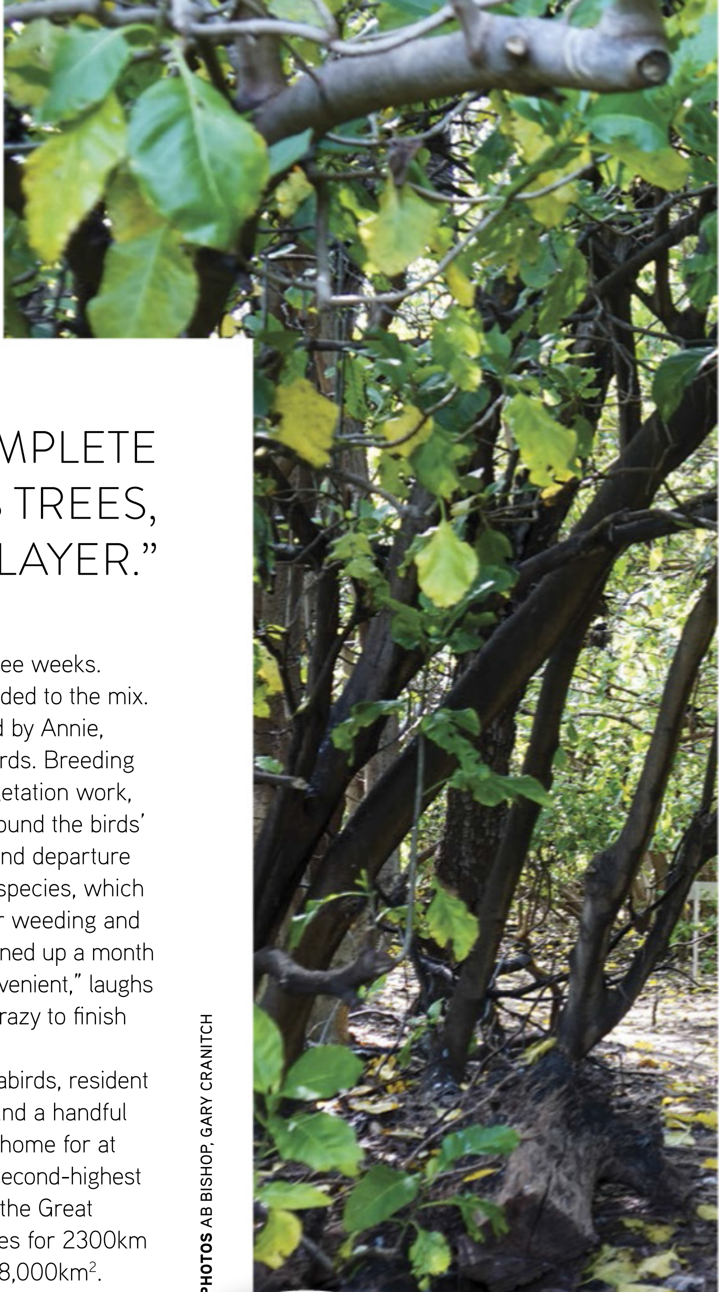
In 1995, pilot Peter Gash and his family began flying passengers to the island and learning the challenges of running an island resort. In 2005, the family and partners took over the lease and resort operations to become custodians and stewards, and built what is now an advanced eco-certified resort. With a commitment to protecting and enhancing the island and its surrounding waters, the resort is 100 per cent solar powered, with its own waste management system and desalination plant.

A degraded landscape for decades, the island is being restored to its natural state thanks to the efforts of custodians and volunteers, past and present, who have worked to remove weeds and plant native coral cay species. Revegetation work received a boost in 2018, with the launch of the Reef Islands Initiative by the Great Barrier Reef Foundation (GBRF), with the support of other government and private organisations. Lady Elliot Island was chosen as the first climate change 'ark', as it was considered a valuable habitat for land and sea animals. ►

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, AB BISHOP, LADY ELLIOT ISLAND ECO RESORT

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN
Surrounded by a wide, shallow reef, Lady Elliot Island is a haven for marine creatures, including manta rays and turtles; heading up the revegetation team and nursery are Jim and Annie Buck; seedlings are grown in 4L bags, which are partly buried for heat protection and stabilisation; the lighthouse keepers' houses in a barren landscape, circa 1950; Annie checks the plants while Jim inspects the irrigation.





> “WE’RE BUILDING A COMPLETE ECOSYSTEM THAT INCLUDES TREES, SHRUBS AND A GROUND LAYER.”

An intricate ‘ecosystem resilience plan’ was developed with Queensland Parks’ botanists, which led to the creation of a nursery that can stock 6000 plants.

The nursery is nestled within part of a *Pisonia* forest, and visitors can explore it and say “G’day” to Annie and Jim Buck, Nursery Coordinator and Environmental Management Officer, respectively. They’ve managed the nursery and revegetation program on behalf of the GBRF since its inception, and volunteered with Queensland Parks for many years before that.

Jim explains that the program involves more than planting trees: “We’re building a complete ecosystem that includes trees, shrubs and a ground layer.”

Such a large-scale project requires a structured management process, so the ‘natural area’ is divided into 52 zones, with gardening tasks split into defined categories. It’s a challenging environment in which to operate a nursery: due to biosecurity issues, no potting mix, soil or mulch can be brought in, and most cuttings and seeds are supplied by Queensland Parks. The 40 species that make up the island’s natural flora are grown in specific areas and groups as informed by experienced botanists.

Annie uses an interesting mix for seed propagation. “It’s finely mulched coconut trees! These non-natives were planted all over the island and we are slowly replacing them with pandanus. We found that it’s the best medium for seed because it drains well but holds moisture.”

The potting mix for seedlings is a rich two-year-old compost made from less invasive weeds, other vegetation and restaurant scraps. It’s all put through a solar-operated composting system that breaks it down in two to three weeks. Bark chips and sand are added to the mix.

The main challenge faced by Annie, Jim and their team is the birds. Breeding season puts a stop to revegetation work, and tasks are scheduled around the birds’ usual arrival (September) and departure (March), depending on the species, which leaves five to six months for weeding and planting. “Last year, they turned up a month early, which was very inconvenient,” laughs Jim. “We had to work like crazy to finish the tasks we’d scheduled!”

Almost 100 species of seabirds, resident and migratory shorebirds, and a handful of land birds call the island home for at least part of the year – the second-highest diversity of bird species on the Great Barrier Reef, which stretches for 2300km and covers a staggering 348,000km$^2$.

But this wasn’t the case during the period when there was very little vegetation on the cay. From the late 1860s, the island was stripped (bar eight *Pisonia* trees) ►

**PHOTOS** AB BISHOP, GARY CRANITCH

### CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

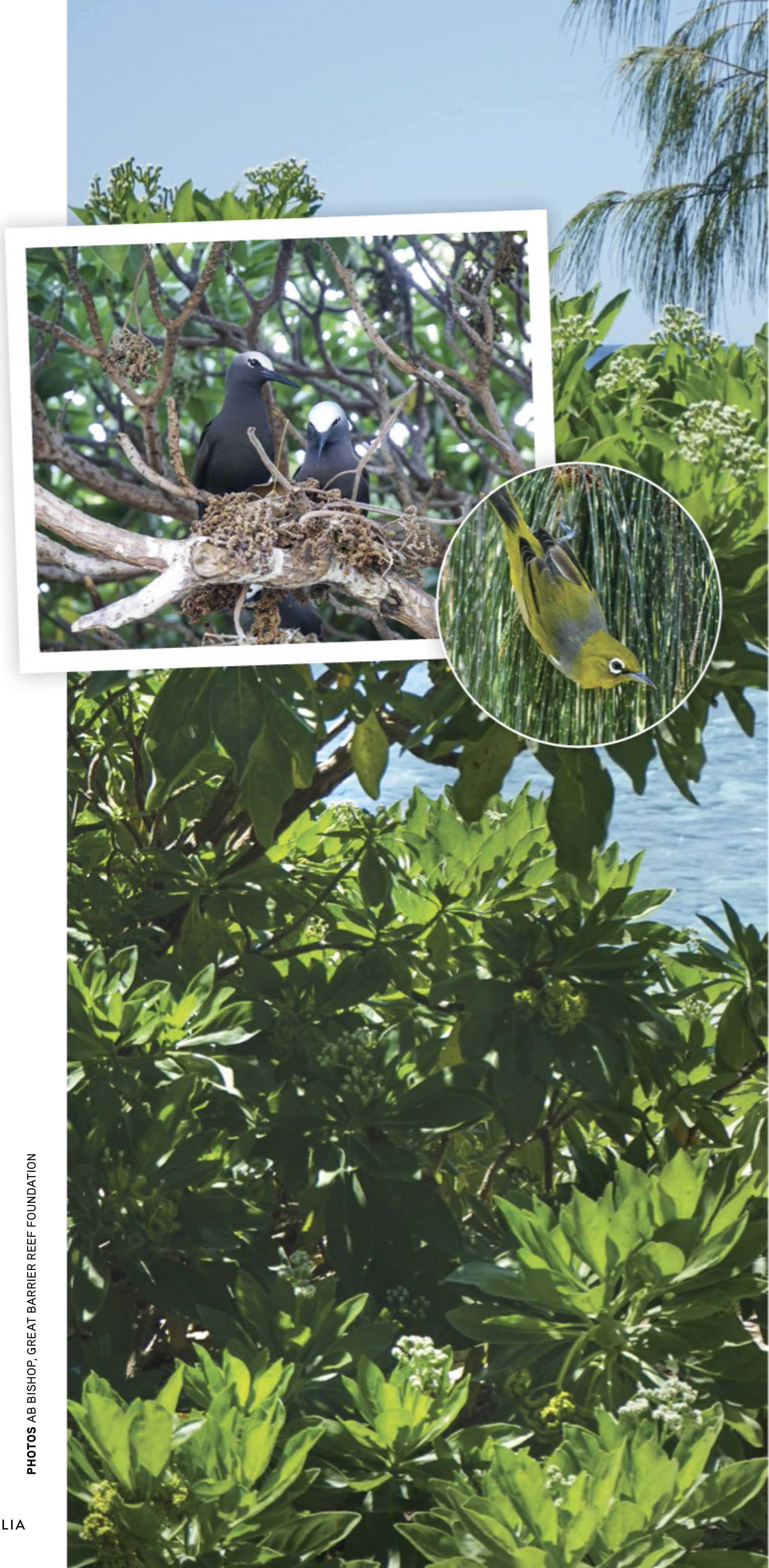
*Pisonia grandis* trees belong to the bougainvillea family and form a dense canopy, which prevents weeds from re-emerging; aerial roots anchor *Pandanus tectorius* in the cay's coarse, unstable soil; Annie sows seed of coastal jack bean (*Canavalia rosea*) in coconut mulch; frontline coastal shrub octopus bush (*Heliotropium arboreum*) has adapted to the salty environment; a red-tailed tropicbird and fluffy chick; (*inset*) octopus bush flowers.

and mined for guano (accumulated seabird droppings and a highly effective fertiliser) for a decade. Any subsequent regrowth was devoured by the goats placed there as a food source for stranded sailors.

Although the seabirds and shorebirds are adapted to ocean living, they nest on land, often relying on specific vegetation. Ground nesters, such as the common noddy and crested tern, lay their eggs in short grass, while mating pairs of red-tailed tropicbirds usually incubate their single egg under octopus bushes (*Heliotropium arboreum*). The black noddy builds its nest in trees – *Pisonia*, in particular. The plants rely on the birds, too, as the nutrient-rich droppings of a marine-critter diet add to the soil layer.

Jim and Annie estimate that about half of the island's natural areas have been revegetated in four years. As all the species are adapted to the climate and environment, and nurtured for 20 weeks, they grow exceptionally fast. "There's a certain sense of satisfaction when you walk into a forest and think 'I did that, and look at it now!'" says Annie.

**Read more about Lady Elliot Island in next month's issue.**



LEFT TO RIGHT
Black noddy birds build nests from vegetation and droppings; one of the island's few land birds, a Capricorn silvereye; plants such as octopus bush and coastal she-oak play a role here in protecting the health of the reef.

Cays are low-elevation land masses formed out of rock, sand or coral. Pronounced 'key' the word was derived from the Spanish word *cayo*, meaning small island. Shingle coral cays develop when storm-induced rubble (from old coral, mostly calcium carbonate) accumulates on a reef, building up over time until it extends above the surface. Visiting birds add their own deposits, which provide nutrients for germinating seeds that blow or wash in. Soil eventually develops from the guano and decomposing plant material.

**PHOTOS** AB BISHOP, GREAT BARRIER REEF FOUNDATION

PHOTO ISTOCK

# marvellous MULCH

From the aesthetic to the practical to the downright beneficial, mulch is an all-rounder that has you – and your garden – covered, writes CHLOE FOSTER

**We all know mulch is the stuff we put on our gardens – but it's so much more! It's usually made from chopped up branches and trunks, but there are many other organic and inorganic options. Their specific qualities make them suitable for different applications, such as ornamental beds, vegie gardens, underneath trees and in bare areas.**

**Mulch really is the bee's knees, because one simple act of mulching covers many tasks. It starves weeds of sunlight and air, slows water run-off, and reduces evaporation, keeping soil moist. Over time, it helps to improve the structure of clay, which facilitates air and water movement through the soil. It adds nutrients and structure to sandy soils. Mulch reduces erosion and insulates soil, benefiting plants and soil organisms such as earthworms. It can also take our gardens from drab to fab, providing a neat and finished look.**

**Organic mulches include lucerne hay, pea straw, sugarcane and chipped bark of various sizes. These decompose at various rates and are the most common, cost-effective mulches. Apply in layers 5–10cm deep in new areas, and 5cm deep when re-mulching. A layer that's too thin will need topping up more ►**

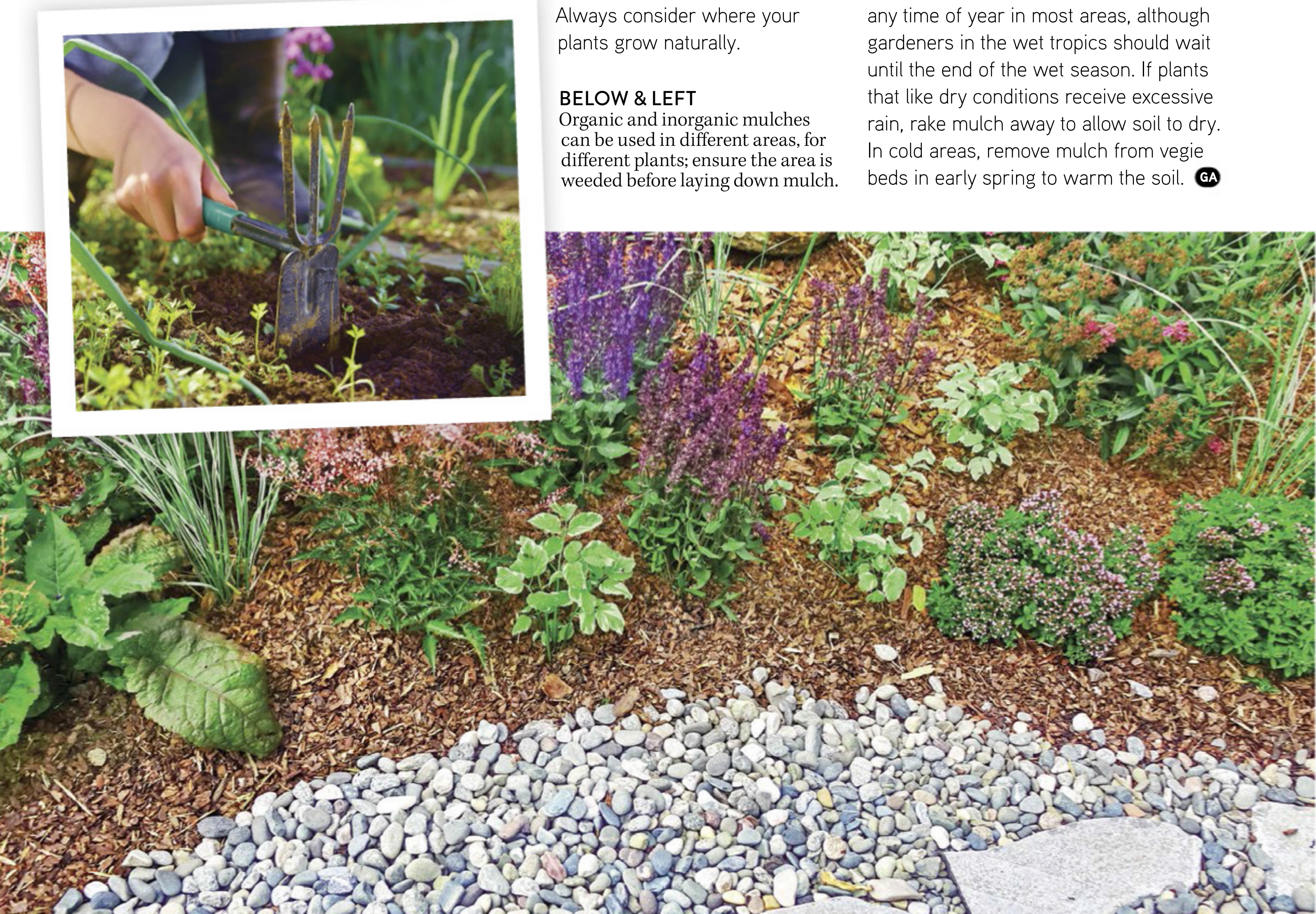
quickly and will allow weeds and grass to grow through. A layer that's too thick lasts longer but doesn't allow water through, and your plants will suffer. Chunky mulch decomposes slowly and doesn't need to be reapplied as often as some others, such as bush mulch. When mulch starts resembling the soil, it's time to reapply!

Inorganic mulches don't decompose and can be relatively expensive. They include gravel, pebbles and scoria. Used judiciously, they can become a feature, and they're practical near buildings in fire-prone areas, or for indoor plants.

Whatever you apply, it's essential to weed the area first, by hand for small areas, or with a whipper-snipper or mower for large areas. In garden beds, water and fertilise plants before laying cardboard or newspaper, then mulch. Avoid plastic weed mat because, while it deters weeds underneath, it provides the perfect moist environment for blow-in weed seeds that, once germinated, are difficult to remove.

Use the same method when mulching excessively weedy areas or creating a new garden bed on lawn, but apply the mulch 10–15cm thick. Allow 3–6 months before starting to plant up the new area.

Not all ornamental plants need mulching. Desert plants, for example, grow best with gravel mulch or nothing. Organic mulches create a more humid environment than arid species are used to, and can cause fungal problems to develop. Always consider where your plants grow naturally.



**BELOW & LEFT**
Organic and inorganic mulches can be used in different areas, for different plants; ensure the area is weeded before laying down mulch.

## DYED MULCHES

**Available in black (carbon), red (iron oxide), and yellow or green (vegetable-based dye), dyed mulches are often made from old pallets or other types of recycled timber. These mulches may have a dubious past, as pallets are sometimes used for holding chemicals and they may have been treated with arsenic or copper-based products. Also, they don't decompose as well as regular organic mulches. Consider these factors when choosing your mulch.**

Mulch can be applied and reapplied at any time of year in most areas, although gardeners in the wet tropics should wait until the end of the wet season. If plants that like dry conditions receive excessive rain, rake mulch away to allow soil to dry. In cold areas, remove mulch from vegie beds in early spring to warm the soil. GA

**MANY AUSTRALIAN ANIMALS AND INSECTS (INCLUDING BEES) NEST IN THE GROUND, SO THEY NEED BARE SOIL. CONSIDER LEAVING SOME MULCH-FREE SPOTS FOR THEM.**

ABOVE
Different types of mulch: (*from top*) pine bark, lawn clippings, sugarcane, pea straw, shells.

**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

## ORGANIC **MULCHES**

| | Pros | Cons | Suitable plants |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Pine bark** | Dark tones help make plants pop; decomposes slowly; mid-price | Doesn't add much organic matter to soil; can maintain acidity in acid soils | Most plants, particularly those that grow in acidic soil |
| **Bush mulch** | Rustic and natural look; cheap | Can be hydrophobic; draws nitrogen from soil if fresh; variable colour and size | Ornamentals |
| **Lawn clippings, leaf litter** | Easily available | Low nutrient value; needs to be used sparingly | Ornamentals |
| **Coloured mulches** | Adds colour | Fades; decomposes slowly; potentially contains chemicals | Ornamentals |
| **Sugarcane** | Promotes soil microbes; more termite resistant; use of waste product | Can form a crust | Vegie gardens, ornamentals, perennial borders |
| **Pea straw** | Allows water to filter through; breaks down easily, adding nutrients to soil | Often sprouts pea plants | Vegie gardens, ornamentals, perennial borders |
| **Lucerne** | Adds nitrogen and promotes soil microbes; breaks down easily | Decomposes quickly so needs refreshing more frequently | Vegie gardens, perennial borders |

## INORGANIC **MULCHES**

| | Pros | Cons | Suitable plants |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gravel, pebbles** | Various sizes and colours; deters fungal diseases; water penetrates easily; keeps soil cool; doesn't burn or blow away | Potentially expensive; high maintenance | Dry-climate plants |
| **Shells** | Cool-toned colours | Hard to source | Dry-climate plants and coastal plants |

# free & easy

Some of the most satisfying plants in the garden are the ones that 'take' easily and provide endless gifts for friends. Here are the best plants for maximum returns, writes **JACKIE FRENCH**

The old white bucket sitting just outside my window is filled with sand and three 'new' rose bushes. They arrived as three twigs, pruned from a friend's rose bush, an old rambling variety that covers sheds and gives masses of small purple blooms with no care whatsoever – my kind of rose. One of them is going to clamber over our front fence. The other two will be gifts.

Most garden plants grow easily from cuttings, partly because those that are simple to propagate have become popular. A single bush can be the best investment ever, giving you hundreds of new plants to give away for decades, with only about 10 minutes of work and patience.

My cuttings are grown from the 'snap and bung it in' method. If you get hooked on propagating, hunt for a good book, as there's a lot more to learn. But the plants below are literally a snap to grow.

## hydrangeas

Pick blooms with at least 60cm of stem and place in a vase. Keep the water topped up and the vase clean while the flowers fade to a lovely parchment colour. After a month or two, roots will have grown at the base of each stem. Gently pot your new hydrangeas. Wait about six months until they bloom before giving them away.

## mints

Propagate any kind of mint, from culinary, curly and variegated apple mint, to black peppermint for herbal tea. Cut about 15cm of stem and place the cut end in a glass of water. Wait until roots grow, then plant. If you don't have mint growing, this is a good excuse to buy a pot, to ensure a supply for you and your friends.

## roses

Wait until winter, though cuttings may still take at any time of year. Snip off about 30cm of hard wood (not last year's soft growth). Snap cleanly. Remove any leaves or flowers, then cut again just below a leaf node (that's the bulgy bit where leaves emerge from the stem). Pinch off thorns from the lower 15cm. Place the cutting 15cm deep in a bucket of moist sand. Keep moist.

Most of your cuttings will show leaves in spring, but don't transplant them for a year, to ensure they have a sturdy root system. Almost all rambler cuttings 'take', and at least half of the other roses do too. If you see a rose you love in a garden, leave a note in the letterbox asking for a cutting. Gardeners tend to be generous, especially with people who admire their gardens.

## thyme

Snip off a branch with a bit of the hard stem. Plant with just the leaf tips showing. Wait six months for a good-looking plant.

## cacti

Break off a branch, let the end dry for a couple of days, then plant as shallowly as you can without it falling over. Water only when the soil feels dry. The time to root and grow will vary with each kind of cactus.

## african violets

Choose a healthy leaf, not too old but not very young. Cut it off with as much stem as possible. Fill a pot with potting mix. Plant the stem hairy-side up, with the leaf leaning slightly so it's at the necessary shallow angle. Water well and gently. Keep the soil moist, or place the pot in a transparent plastic bag – puff into it before you close it so the air stays humid, and you shouldn't need to water it again. Or just bung the leaf stem into a pot of soil and water it now and then – less reliable, but it usually works. Allow at least six months for it to look like a respectable gift.

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN
Geranium, lavender, thyme and hydrangea are all easy to propagate and will produce gifts for years.

## tree dahlias

Cut about 60cm of stem with at least two 'segments'. Plant horizontally about 10cm deep in winter. It will zoom then bloom next summer and autumn.

## geraniums & pelargoniums

Look for a lowish branch that will snap, not bend. Snip off about 60cm. Plant 20cm deep in the pot you will present to your friend. Allow about six months for it to become a gorgeous bloomer.

## other plants

For wormwood, rosemary, curry plant, buddleja, crepe myrtle, bougainvillea, hibiscus, lavender, federation daisies, almost all salvias and hundreds more, proceed as for geraniums. If it snaps, it will probably grow. Remove all leaves before planting. The bag trick used for African violets will increase the success rate and minimise watering, though my salvias and lavender have grown from cuttings I just thrust into the ground.

Hopefully, you've realised that you own enough plants for perpetual gift giving. If not, it's time to 'invest' in a few that will look fabulous for you and provide years of gifts to come. GA

## A FEW HINTS

- Use a sharp knife or scissors to snip your cuttings, as torn edges may rot.
- Water well after planting the cutting to help the soil adhere to it.
- Keep cuttings moist and in a warm, sheltered spot with plenty of light but out of direct sunlight.
- Hormone rooting powder improves the success rate, but you shouldn't need it with these plants.

PHOTOS PELARGONIUM FOR EUROPE, ISTOCK

# DRYING times

Grow and dry your own herbs, and you'll always have the makings of a gourmet meal on hand. Here, **HANNAH MOLONEY** shares three herb-drying methods

Herbs are one of the most useful and economical things you can grow. They punch above their weight, transforming a boring meal into a delightfully interesting one with just a small handful of leaves or seeds.

To ensure I never have to buy them, I grow an over-the-top amount of mint, rosemary, thyme, parsley, sage, dill, coriander and oregano. I harvest large bunches of leaves (sometimes just the seed for dill and coriander) when they are in their prime, then dry and store them for year-round use in the kitchen.

I even do this with plants such as rosemary, which pumps out fresh leaves in all seasons and is probably the hardiest plant in the world (in my humble opinion). When I'm cooking dinner and it's cold, dark and raining, I'd much prefer to reach for a jar of dried rosemary than go out into the garden to harvest a fresh sprig.

Drying your own herbs is satisfyingly straightforward and there are lots of ways to do it. Here are three methods that should provide an option to suit everyone. ►

PHOTOS NATALIE MENDHAM

## HANGING DECORATIONS

One of my favourite ways to dry herbs is to turn them into decorations and hang them all over the kitchen. One time, in our old kitchen, I strung up what looked like a giant spider web across the ceiling and hung dozens of bunches of mixed herbs on it. I loved it, but my dear husband, who is almost seven feet tall, not so much, as bits of rosemary kept sticking in his hair!

Herbs take about a month to air-dry like this. Gardeners in the tropics should avoid using this method during the wet season, as there's potential for mould to creep in. Instead, pop them on top of the fridge or an indoor hot water cylinder.

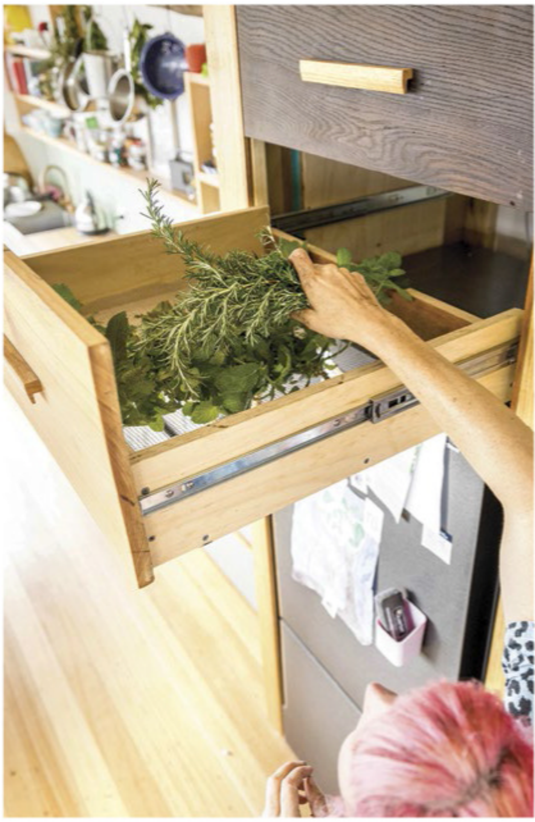
**LEFT & ABOVE**
Bunches of fresh herbs are tied together around their stems, leaving enough string to hang them somewhere to dry; Hannah with mint and rosemary ready to hang.

**PHOTOS** NATALIE MENDHAM

## BROWN PAPER BAG

Then there's the old 'stuff them in a brown paper bag and pop it in a drawer or cupboard for a month' approach. I've done this lots when I haven't had much space. It works perfectly well – however, you must remember to harvest the herbs. I've been known to forget and then rediscover old bags of dried mint a year later. Which, by the way, was still totally fine to use!

LEFT & BELOW
A simple way to dry herbs is to store them in a paper bag in a cupboard or drawer – as long as you don't forget that they're there; on top of the fridge is a great drying spot due to the heat emitted – this purpose-built drawer that Hannah has is ideal.



## Once they're dry...

**You'll know when your herbs are completely dry, as they'll be very brittle to the touch and will crumble in your hands. Here's how I harvest the dried leaves and seeds:**

- **LEAVES:** I pop the leaves into a large bowl, where I quickly and vigorously rub them between my hands. This reduces the volume, and I can easily remove all the woody stems at the same time.
- **SEEDS:** I put the whole bunch of herbs into a brown paper bag, hold it tightly and bash it on the table. This dislodges most of the seeds, which settle at the bottom of the bag. I then take out all the stems (these go into the compost) and clean the seeds to remove bits of husk. The seeds are stored in a clearly labelled glass jar, ready for me to use. They also make lovely gifts for friends or family.

## TOP OF THE FRIDGE

Most fridges emit heat, and this microclimate can be harnessed to dry herbs. The more efficient the fridge, the less heat it'll put out (which is our case), but it's worthwhile and effective to use whatever heat is emitted. We built a drawer directly above our fridge with a mesh floor that allows the heat to freely move up into the drying space. We pop in bunches of herbs and forget about them for a month, at which point they're 100 per cent dry. My hot tip is to put some paper on the mesh under the fresh herbs. This stops small flakes of the dry herbs falling on the top of the fridge, which is quite hard to clean! GA

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# IN THE PATCH

with **PHIL DUDMAN**

## inside...

**64 GROW** Cauliflower

**66 HACKS** Create a spade edge for your vegie bed

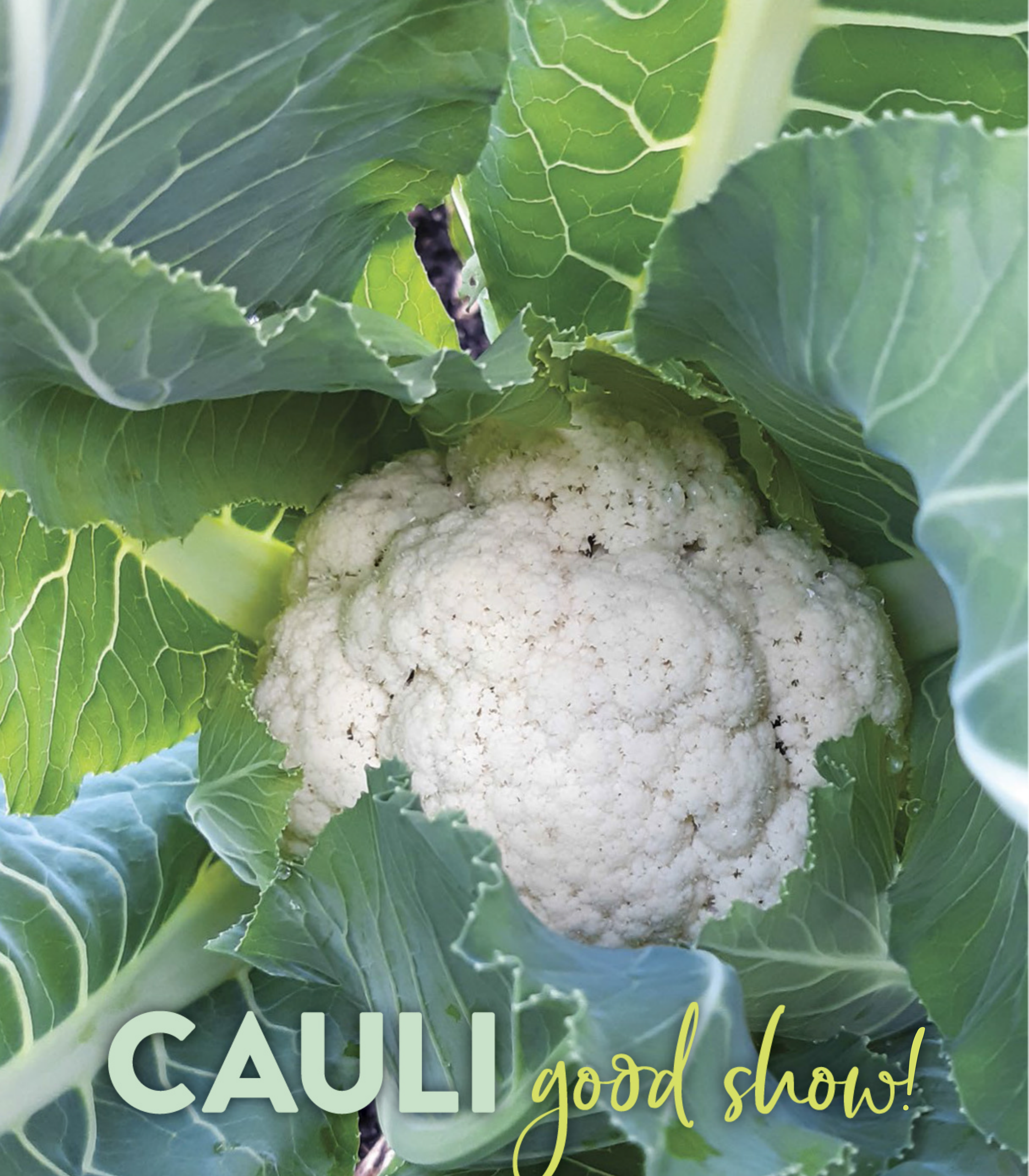
**68 ACTION** Tasks for the time-conscious gardener + sow & plant chart

**69 MYTHS** Does fruit really need sunlight to ripen?

**70 PESTS** How to combat those hungry figleaf beetles

Cauliflower
'All the year roun

**PHOTO** GAP PHOTOS



# CAULI *good show!*

From cauliflower cheese to pie crusts and buffalo wings, this shapeshifter veg is never boring and isn't very hard to grow, writes **PHIL DUDMAN**

Growing a crop of cauliflowers can fill a backyard gardener with pride. Driven by the dream of a perfectly formed, pure white curd, we lovingly nurture the plants and protect them from marauding pests. And when harvest day finally arrives, we march that big plump beauty to the kitchen with our chests puffed out.

Of course, things can go dreadfully wrong. Plants may end up stunted, or covered in caterpillars, with loose heads as small as tennis balls and not as white as we'd hoped. It's true that caulis can be tricky when you're new to gardening, but once you have the basics sorted, you'll be growing big, beautiful curds every time.

## getting started

Like most plants in the cabbage family (Brassicaceae), cauliflowers prefer cool conditions. Now is a good time to sow seed or purchase seedlings in preparation for autumn planting. Start seed in punnets so you can move them around to suit the conditions. If it's a hot, sunny day, set up a shadecloth or move them into a spot with dappled light. Don't put them in full shade; the seedlings will become leggy and weak.

Once the seedlings are big enough to handle, plant them individually into 10cm pots of premium potting mix. Grow them in pots until the summer heat has passed and it's cool enough to plant them in the ground. Every week, give your potted seedlings some liquid fertiliser mixed at half strength, to support healthy growth.

## growing & harvesting

When planting cauliflower seedlings, space them about 45cm apart. Feel free to bury the stems, as this will give the plants added stability. They can become top heavy as they develop, causing them to tip over and expose their roots, which can be fatal. If they need support, push in a short bamboo stake next to each plant.

Caulis are big feeders, and sulk if they don't get enough food. Be generous when preparing their soil. Add plenty of compost, some well-rotted manure, and a good handful of blood and bone and pelletised chicken manure per square metre. They like a soil pH of 6.5. If yours is below that, add lime. Spread fertiliser around plants in another 4–6 weeks, and supplement with a fortnightly application of liquid fertiliser.

Keep up your routine of managing cabbage white butterfly (*above*), and look out for infestations of grey aphids on the leaves. Aphids can be cleared up with a sharp spray of water from the hose or a couple of applications of soap spray. Slugs and snails love caulis, so check over the leaves regularly and pick them off. If numbers are up, put out some beer traps to lure them in. They can't resist!

It normally takes about three months for cauliflower curds to appear. Exposure to the elements can cause discolouration of the curds. This doesn't affect the eating quality of your caulis at all, but if you're aiming for prize-winning purity, protect them by pulling some leaves over each curd and tying them in place with twine.

Once a curd has formed a nice tight head, use a knife to cut it from the plant. Be ready to grab it as soon as it looks ready. When you leave a cauli on too long, the head becomes loose as the florets separate, but it'll still be good to eat.

### STOP THE PRESS!

You may already know about cauliflower's greatest foe – the larvae of the cabbage white butterfly. It's a hungry leaf chewer that causes terrible problems. If the butterflies lay eggs on your seedlings, the emerging caterpillars will decimate them in days. Take precautions by covering the seedlings with pest-exclusion netting or spraying regularly with a bio-insecticide such as Dipel.

### at a glance

**common name**
cauliflower

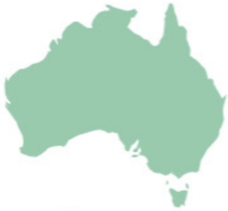
**botanic name**
*Brassica oleracea*
Botrytis Group

↑ 30–75cm ↔ 30–75cm

☀ full sun

late summer to autumn

90–120 days



🟩 suitable

### 5 top picks

- **Snow Queen** A hybrid with huge white heads; grows best in temperate areas.
- **All Year Round** A good all-round performer with dense, pure white, medium-sized curds.
- **Snowball** A relatively compact variety producing medium-sized creamy white heads.
- **Purple Sicily** An easy-to-grow attractive Italian heirloom variety with brilliant purple heads.
- **Sixty Days** A fast-growing variety that matures early; suits warm areas.

PHOTOS PHIL DUDMAN, ISTOCK

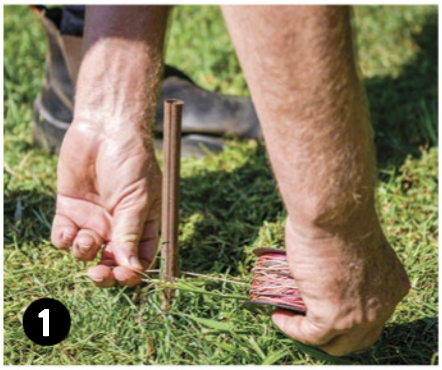
# cutting EDGE

If you don't have the time or money to install a solid brick or timber edge on your patch, try a good old-fashioned spade edge to keep the grass out. **PHIL DUDMAN** demonstrates how to create and maintain one

**STEP-BY-STEP**

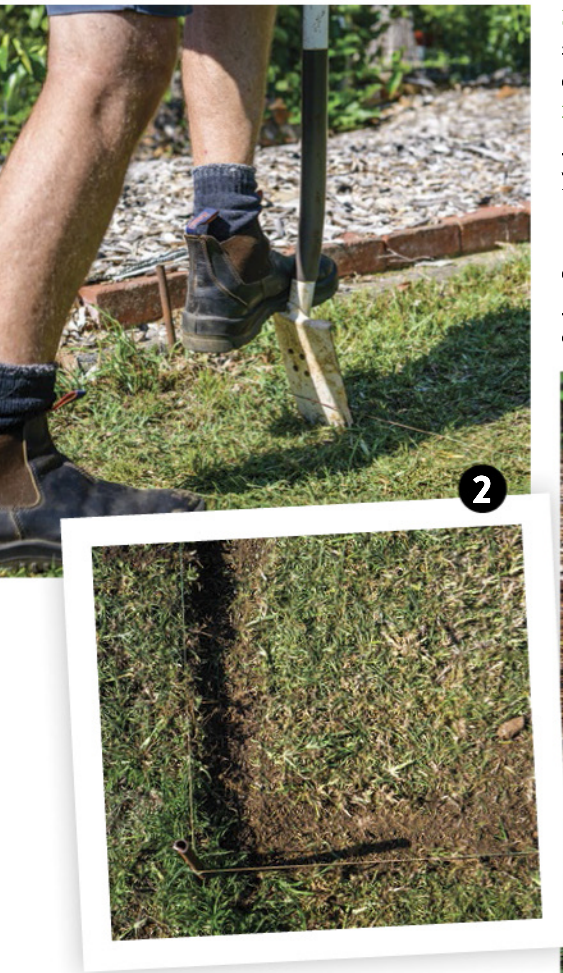
## CREATE AN EDGE

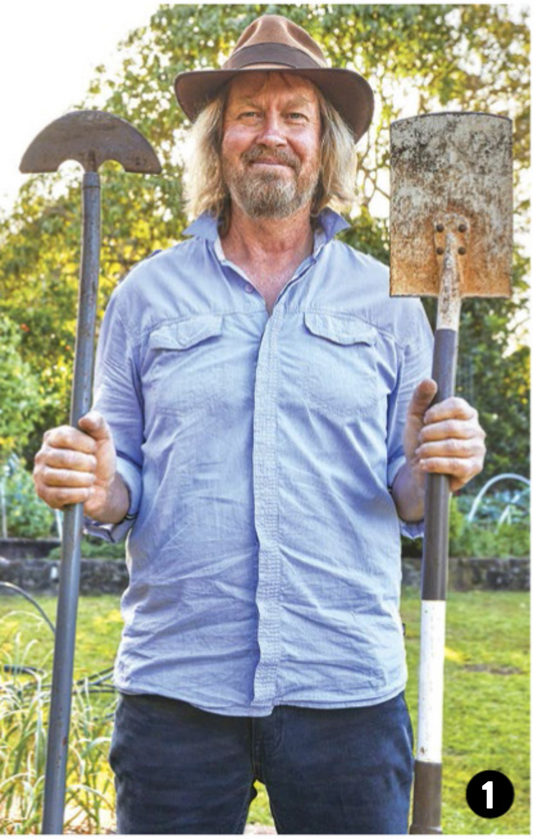
**1 MARK** out where the edge of your garden bed will be. Use either a stringline and pegs for a straight edge, or a garden hose if you want a curved edge.



**2 USE** a sharp spade to dig out a narrow strip of turf on the inside of the stringline or the garden hose.

**3 REMOVE** the remaining turf in the growing area and prepare your soil. If you're making a no-dig garden, as I was here, smother the turf with cardboard, or moistened newspaper (eight layers), and overlap the edges generously to stop the grass from growing through. Then top with compost and mulch, ready for planting.

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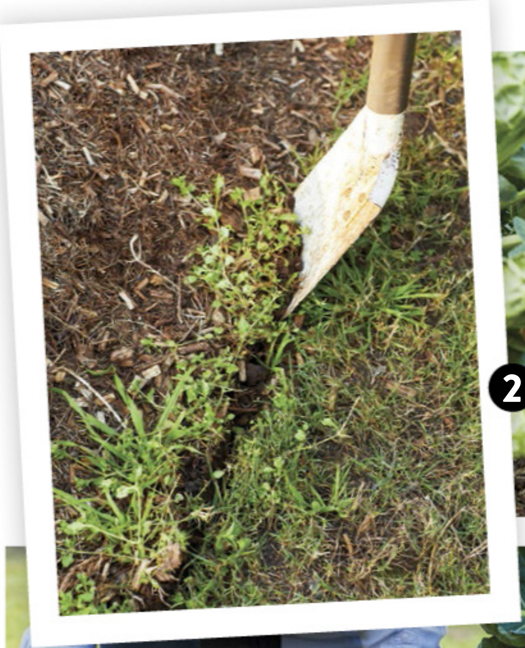
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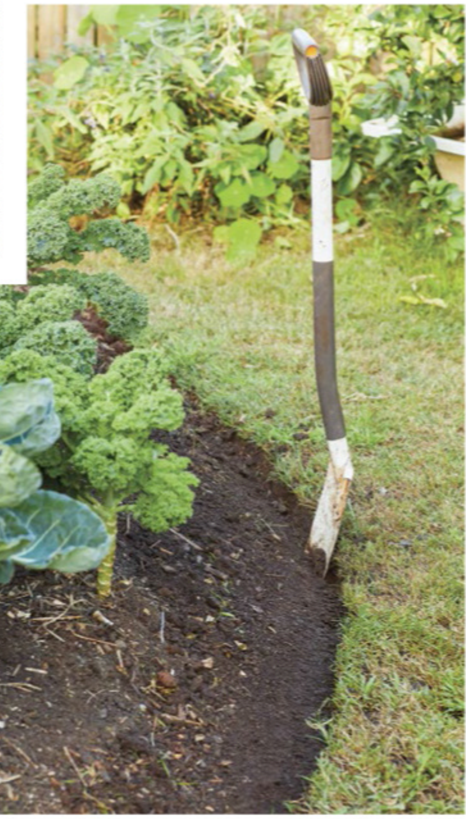
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## MAINTAIN AN EDGE

**1 CHOOSE** your weapon! The best tool to maintain a spade edge is one that's made for the job: a flat-bladed half-moon lawn edger (*above left*) or a flat-bladed spade. Don't have either? You can also use a regular spade (*above right*), as long as it's sharp. If it's not, sharpen it with a sharpening stone or a bench-mounted grinder (always wear safety gear when using power tools) – it makes it so much easier to cut through the grass and soil.

**2 WORK** your way along the edge of the garden bed, pushing the spade into the soil to cut through the encroaching grass and weeds. If you need to, set up another stringline or garden hose to act as a guide.

**3 COLLECT** all the unwanted grass and weeds you've dug up. If they haven't yet developed any seeds, toss them into your compost where they can break down and be returned to the soil later.

**4 RUN** the spade along the edge to do some final shaping and tidying up. *Et voilà!*

**PHOTOS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY NATSKY, ANNA HUTCHCROFT, ISTOCK

Whether you have 15 minutes or an hour to spare, you can still achieve good things in your productive garden. Here are a few suggestions...

**15 MINS**

**SOW LEEKS IN PUNNETS** Leeks can be expensive to buy, but they're cheap and easy to grow at home. Start seed in punnets now, so they'll be ready for planting in the patch when conditions are cooler. Fill a single-cell punnet with premium seed-raising mix, sprinkle seed over the top and cover with another 0.5cm of mix. Place in a spot that gets morning sun, keep moist and liquid-fertilise weekly when seedlings appear. Divide and plant out when they're 10cm tall. Alternatively, use multicell punnets and sow 4–5 seeds per cell. Simply plant these out in their clumps.

**30 MINS**

**THIN BANANA SUCKERS** Over time, banana plants produce a lot of suckers. Before you know it, you have a large, congested clump of giant pseudo-stems that's difficult to manage. Don't let things get to this stage. Always aim to have one stem in fruit and two followers – one medium-sized stem and one small one. Everything else should go. Over the growing season, check the clumps at least once a fortnight to remove excess suckers – it's much easier to remove them when they're small. Use a sharp spade or mattock to carefully dig them out, roots and all.

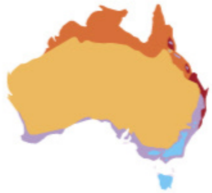
**60 MINS**

**REJUVENATE CROWDED CLUMPS OF LEMONGRASS**

If you have a clump of lemongrass that has outgrown its space, dig it out, divide it into smaller sections and replant. Chop it back with shears first to make it easier to work with – the prunings can be added to the compost or used as mulch in the patch. Use a sharp spade or serrated knife to divide the clumps, and improve the soil with compost before replanting. Keep the soil moist and they'll reshoot in no time. Share extra plants with a neighbour or friend.

## SOW & PLANT NOW

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| asian greens | | | | ● | ● |
| basil | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| beans (french, climbing) | | ● | ● | ● | |
| beetroot | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| broccoli | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| brussels sprouts | | | ● | ● | ● |
| cabbage | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| capsicum/chilli | ● | ● | | | |
| carrot | | | ● | ● | ● |
| cauliflower | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| celery | | | | ● | ● |
| chives | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| cucumber | ● | ● | ● | | |
| eggplant | ● | ● | ● | | |
| kale | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| kohlrabi | | | ● | ● | ● |
| leek | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| lettuce | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| parsnip | | | | ● | ● |
| pumpkin | | ● | ● | | |
| radish | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| silverbeet | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| spring onion | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| swede | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| sweetcorn | ● | ● | ● | | |
| sweet potato | ● | | | | |
| tomato | ● | ● | ● | | |
| turnip | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| zucchini/squash | | ● | ● | | |



**KEY**

| | |
|---|---|
| tropical | ● |
| subtropical | ● |
| arid/semi-arid | ● |
| warm temperate | ● |
| cold temperate | ● |

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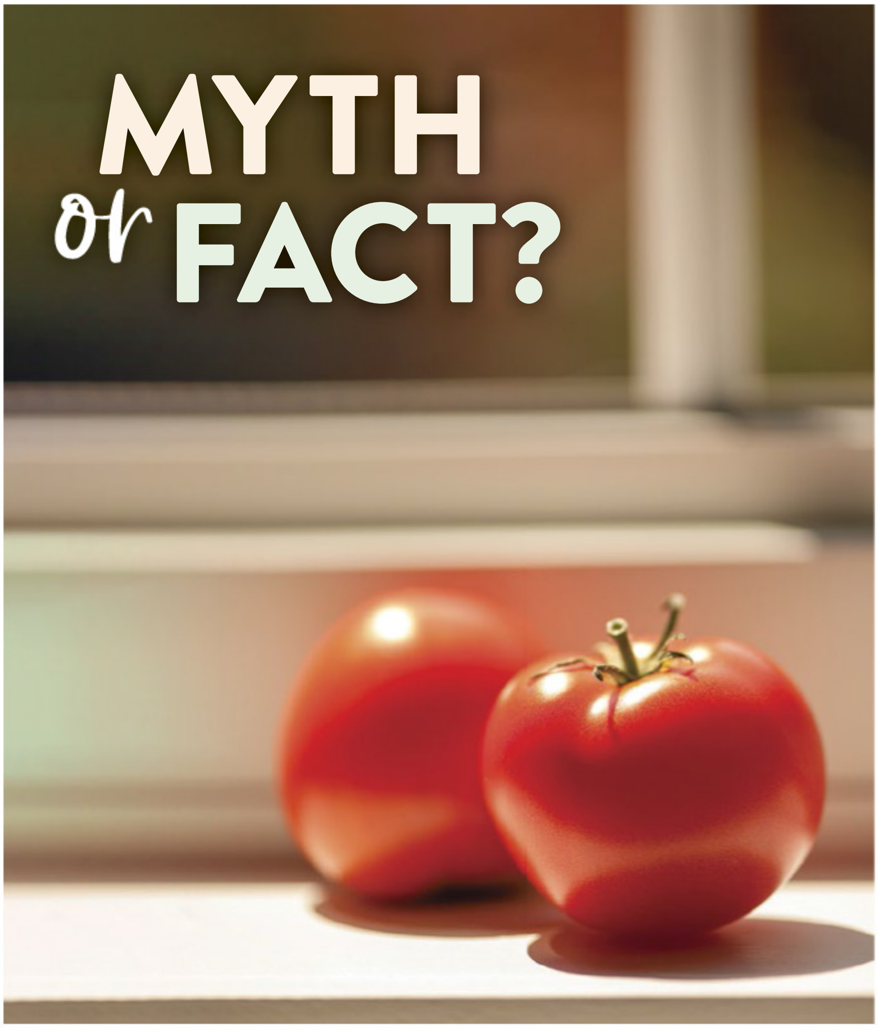


# MYTH or FACT?

## Do fruits need exposure to sunlight to ripen? We've done the investigating for you...

You may have heard people make suggestions like this: put green tomatoes on a sunny windowsill to help them ripen, or open up the canopy of your fruit tree and let the sun in to assist in the ripening of the fruit.

While sunlight does influence ripening indirectly, fruits actually don't need direct exposure to the sun's rays to ripen, and in some cases, it does more harm than good.

The primary factor that stimulates the ripening of fruit is ethylene gas, which is a naturally occurring ripening agent produced by fruit as it matures. Have you have ever tried to force an avocado to ripen by slipping it into a paper bag with a banana? It's the ethylene gas produced by the fast-ripening banana that's doing the business, while the avocados are completely in the dark.

Temperature influences ripening, too, and the optimum temperature varies for different fruit. If it's too cold, ripening will be slow; too hot, and the fruit will over-ripen quickly. While sunlight doesn't have a direct effect on the fruit ripening process, the warmth it creates does.

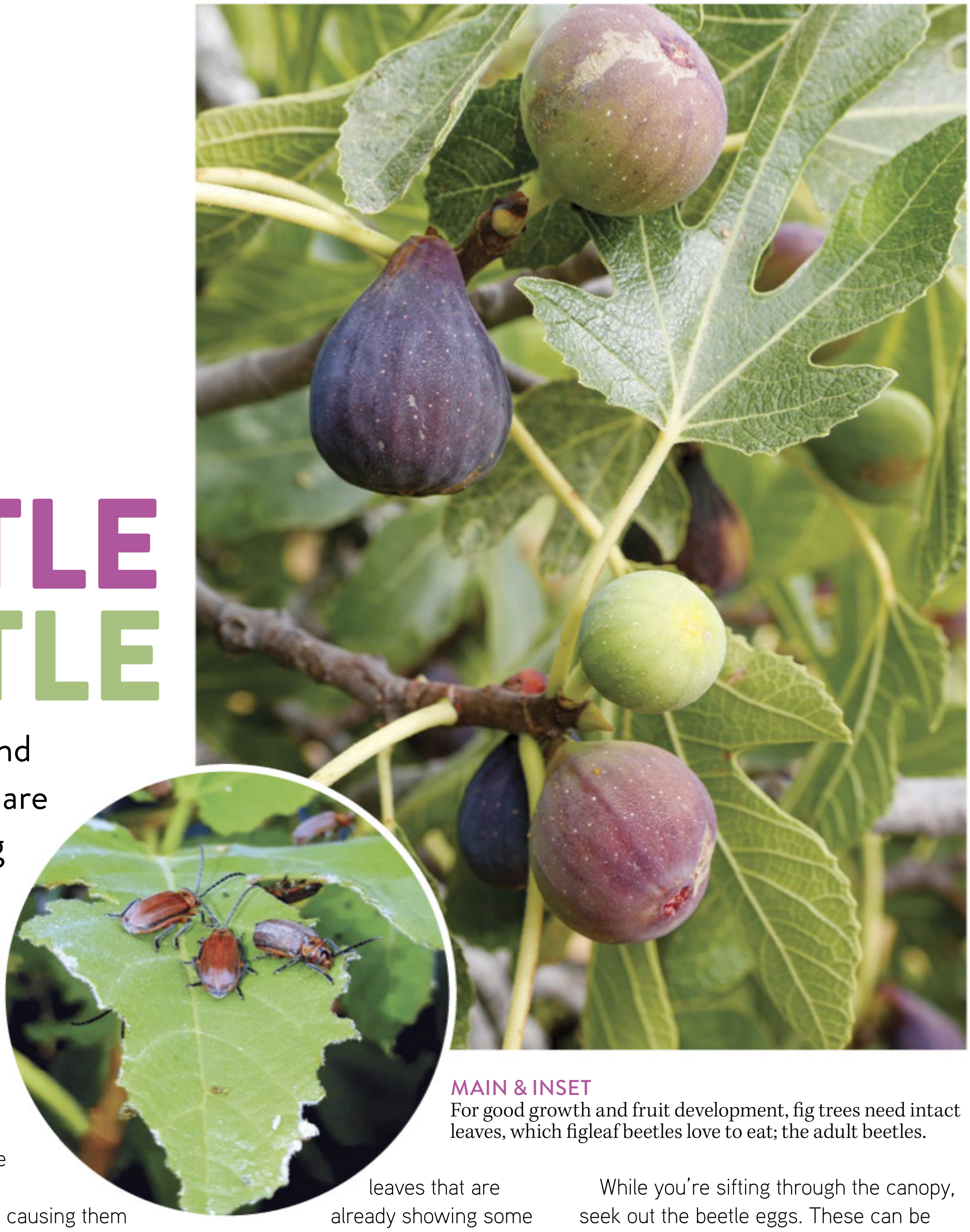
Putting a slow-ripening tomato on a windowsill to capture extra warmth late in the season when conditions are cool is normally okay, but if you expose a green tomato directly to the sun's rays on a hot summer's day, it will likely suffer from scald, which will destroy the fruit. You see this in tomatoes and capsicums while the fruit are still on the plant.

If you open up the centre of a fruit tree, the extra warmth will have a marginally positive effect on ripening, but it's not necessary. The greatest benefit of the extra light is an increase in flower and fruit production on the inner branches of the tree. An open canopy also encourages greater airflow, which will minimise potential fungal problems.

TEXT PHIL DUDMAN PHOTOS ISTOCK

# BEETLE BATTLE

## Hypervigilance and organic methods are key to combating figleaf beetle



MAIN & INSET
For good growth and fruit development, fig trees need intact leaves, which figleaf beetles love to eat; the adult beetles.

If you're growing edible figs, this is one pest you really need to keep an eye out for. Both the adult figleaf beetle and its larvae are leaf chewers. The larvae, in particular, have an insatiable appetite and feed in groups, skeletonising the leaves and causing them to fall. They also mature and breed very quickly, and if left unchecked will defoliate the tree at a rapid rate. Without leaves, a fig tree is unable to produce the energy it needs to grow, and fruit development will come to a grinding halt.

The good news is that this pest is easy to control organically, and it just requires you to check your trees regularly. Start by searching for the larvae. They look like small spiny caterpillars that start off yellow then turn dark blue to black as they mature. They grow to about 1cm long. Check the leaves that are already showing some damage. If you don't see larvae on top of the leaf, they might be on the underside, hiding from birds. When you find them, squash them, or remove the infested leaves completely and destroy them.

Of course, the adult beetles need to go too. They're about 1cm long and a dull brown colour, with a yellowish head and a distinctive black dot on their shoulders. You'll normally find them on the edge of the leaves, chewing inwards from the margin. Pick off each beetle and squash them, or toss them into a bucket of soapy water.

While you're sifting through the canopy, seek out the beetle eggs. These can be yellow or pink, and they'll be arranged in a neat cluster, normally next to the midrib. When you spot them, just wipe them off. Finding eggs and removing them helps to avoid a lot of potential damage. It's like hitting the jackpot!

If you're not too fond of grabbing and squashing things, you can spray the adults and larvae with pyrethrum. It only works on contact, so you need to seek them out and squirt them directly, then follow up a week or two later with another spray to take care of the ones you missed.

TEXT PHIL DUDMAN PHOTOS ISTOCK, SHUTTERSTOCK

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FEBRUARY

# a month in the GARDEN

## More than 50 seasonal jobs to do

words by **JUDY HORTON**

looking good

## Dahlias

**With their bright colours lighting up the late-summer garden, dahlias are deservedly back in fashion. Buy potted dahlias now in full bloom, or look for packaged tubers in the shops during late winter and spring. Dahlias with single flowers are wonderful for attracting bees to their pollen-filled centres and, because the simple flowers aren't too weighty, most won't need staking. Pick blooms for indoors and the plants will go on producing flowers well into autumn.**

PHOTO GAP PHOTOS/HOWARD RICE

## It's time to...

- **Trim** summer-blooming shrubs after their flowers have faded
- **Dig out** and break up congested clumps of daffodils and jonquils before their bulbs start making new growth, then re-plant
- **Fertilise** rose bushes with an organic-based rose food to promote a great autumn display
- **Pick up** and bin diseased leaves from fungus-infected plants

- **Clip off** sunburnt flowers from hydrangeas (*above*) but leave healthy blooms on the shrub to take on their attractive autumn colouration
- **Keep** camellias well mulched and watered at this time while they're forming their new flower buds
- **Go** outside after summer rain showers and pull weeds while the soil is still soft and the roots lift easily
- **Feed** liliums fortnightly with a liquid fertiliser until the foliage browns, then cut the stems off at ground level
- **Pick** sprigs of gum blossom to enjoy in vases – you'll be giving the plants a light prune at the same time
- **Inspect** shrubs with variegated foliage and cut out any green-leafed sections that could take over

## TOP JOB TAKE CUTTINGS TO GROW NEW PLANTS

**Late summer is a good time to try growing some new shrubs for free. Cuttings taken at this time are called 'semi-ripe' because the new growth made in spring has had time to mature or 'ripen', and cuttings are less likely to wilt before their new roots form. Popular shrubs such as azaleas, gardenias, box (*Buxus* spp.) and many grevilleas are good examples. Here's how to propagate these plants.**

**1.** In the coolest part of the day, cut off tip pieces of healthy growth from your favourite shrubs, dropping them into a container of water. Take the cuttings into the shade as quickly as possible.

**2.** Trim the cuttings to about 10cm long and remove some of the bottom leaves. Dip the stem base of each cutting into hormone gel or powder, or honey.

**3.** Make a number of holes in some moist potting mix in a smallish pot, then place one cutting in each hole. Press the cuttings into place.

**4.** Label, water and drain the pot, and cover it with a plastic bag or bottle.

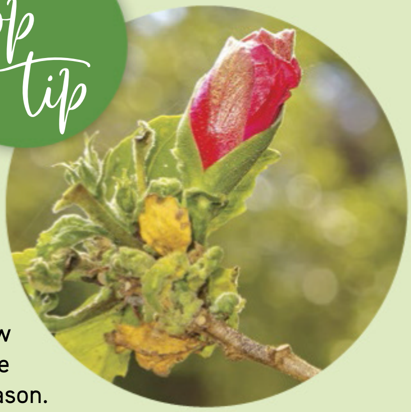
**5.** Keep your cuttings in the shade and don't let them dry out. Wiggle them to test for root formation in late autumn.

ABOVE, FROM LEFT
Gardenias fill the garden with fragrance from spring to autumn; in bloom from winter to spring, azaleas come in various colours; box shrubs are perfect for clipping into hedges.

top tip

## ERINOSE MITE ON HIBISCUS

Grotesque bubbling in hibiscus leaves is the result of the earlier feeding of a tiny mite that is nigh on impossible to see without a magnifier. The result is dramatic, even though the culprit (erinose mite) may be long gone. Cut off, wrap and bin the worst affected pieces, and give new leaves a protective spray of miticide a few times during the growing season.



## get started with WINTER VEGIES

At the end of summer, it's time to start thinking about your winter vegie garden. Dig up empty beds and mix in some compost or aged manure and pelletised fertiliser. If your soil is acidic, add a handful of garden lime or dolomite per square metre. Give the beds a couple of weeks to settle in, then sow seeds of root vegetables such as beetroot, carrot and turnip. Plant seedlings of cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli, rather than sowing seed, so they're able to make as much progress as possible before winter causes growth to slow right down.

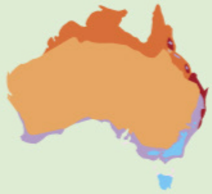
PHOTOS ALAMY, ROBERT FRITH/ACORN PHOTO, ISTOCK

LOOKING FOR THE VEGIE SOW & PLANT CHART? Turn to page 68

## SOW & PLANT NOW

| | tropical | subtropical | arid/semi-arid | warm temperate | cold temperate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| alyssum | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| amaranthus | ● | ● | | ● | |
| bellis perennis | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| calendula | | | ● | ● | ● |
| californian poppy | | | ● | ● | ● |
| carnation | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| celosia | ● | ● | | | |
| cineraria | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| coleus | ● | ● | | | |
| forget-me-not | | | | ● | ● |
| foxglove | | | | ● | ● |
| globe amaranth | ● | ● | | | |
| gypsophila | | | ● | ● | ● |
| hollyhock | | | ● | ● | ● |
| impatiens | ● | ● | | ● | |
| linaria | | | ● | ● | ● |
| livingstone daisy | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| lobelia | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| marigold | ● | ● | ● | ● | |
| nigella | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| pansy | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| poppy | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| primula | | ● | | ● | ● |
| stock | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| sunflower | ● | ● | | | |
| sweet william | | | ● | ● | ● |
| viola | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| virginian stock | | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| wallflower | | ● | ● | ● | ● |

### KEY



**tropical** ●
**subtropical** ●
**arid/semi-arid** ●
**warm temperate** ●
**cold temperate** ●

# Do it now

- **Walk** around the garden each morning and use a pair of quick-snip scissors to deadhead roses, dahlias and summer annuals (*above*)
- **Visit** garden suppliers to seek out exciting new salvia varieties or purchase some of the old favourites
- **Move** heat-stressed hanging baskets into a shadier spot
- **Watch** your lawns for any rapidly spreading dead patches caused by the leaf-eating armyworm caterpillar and treat quickly (applying Dipel in the evening can help)
- **Prepare** sunny beds for autumn sweet pea planting by digging in organic matter and, in acidic soils, some handfuls of dolomite
- **Re-pot** root-filled container plants, especially if they have been in the same pot for a number of years
- **Feed** the lawn with a slow-release fertiliser to encourage healthy leaf growth throughout autumn
- **Lift** and divide clumps of Pacific Coast iris, then replant them as quickly as possible
- **Pick off** any rust-affected leaves from geraniums (*Pelargonium* spp.), then prune the plants and feed them to promote new growth
- **Plant** native fuchsias (*Correa* spp.) in the garden for their bird-attracting autumn and winter blooms

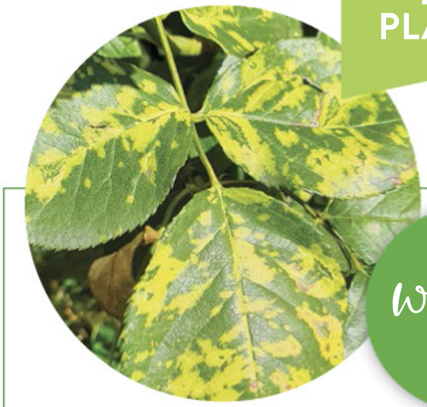
**TOP JOB**

# TRY GROWING lotus

The beautiful lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*), with its sacred connotations, is readily available in full bloom in late summer. Most lotus plants will grow in a wide range of climates, as long as the water doesn't freeze during winter, but it's best to purchase from a local supplier and seek advice from them to ensure your lotus variety is suited to your climate.

Grow lotus in a good-sized waterproof container in a spot that receives at least six hours of sun each day. Fill about a third of the pot with good heavy garden soil and transplant the lotus into this. Top up with pea-sized gravel or pebbles to keep the soil in place, then fill the pot with water, making sure the leaves are standing up above the water level.

Feed twice during summer by pushing plugs of crushed organic fertiliser pellets or blood and bone wrapped in permeable material – such as gauze, stockings or tissue paper – into the soil. Re-pot an established lotus every 2–3 years.



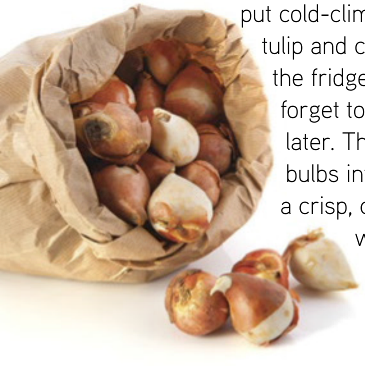
watch out

## ROSE MOSAIC VIRUS

**Wavy zigzag lines in rose leaves that look like the result of a bad tie-dye job are a symptom of rose mosaic virus. The good news is this disease has minimal negative effects on an infected rose and the problem won't spread to its neighbours. The bad news is that there's little that can be done except pruning off and binning affected leaves. Most importantly, don't ever propagate from an infected plant, as this will reproduce the virus.**

## Plan for spring bulbs

Shops and catalogues in late summer and autumn are full of enticing spring bulbs, which is a reminder that it's time to order, buy and plan for your winter and spring display. It's good to get in early for the best choice of spring bulbs, but it's too early to plant in most places. Store bulbs in a cool, dry spot until the soil is cooler. In warmer districts, put cold-climate bulbs such as hyacinth, tulip and crocus in the crisper drawer of the fridge at the end of March, and don't forget to plant them a couple of months later. This thorough chilling tricks the bulbs into thinking they've been through a crisp, cold winter and, as a result, they will bloom with enthusiasm.



**PHOTOS** ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS/FRIEDRICH STRAUSS, SHUTTERSTOCK, PAUL DRURY

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# Edibles

- **Cut** artichokes at ground level (*above*) to encourage vigorous growth
- **Bag** fruit or net entire trees in fruit-fly-prone areas to protect crops from attack
- **Make** early morning forays into the garden to catch hard-bodied pests such as grasshoppers, green vegetable bugs and harlequin bugs, dropping them into a bucket of water with some detergent added
- **Cut down** raspberry canes that have fruited, then tie the new canes, which will carry next summer's fruit, securely onto their supports
- **Drape** shadecloth over tomatoes and capsicums during heatwaves to protect the fruit from sun scald
- **Pluck**, bag and bin any summer fruit that is showing signs of the fungal disease brown rot, which starts with a small soft spot and spreads rapidly
- **Check** the lower trunk of citrus trees to find, catch and squash stink bugs that are taking shelter from the heat (wear eye and skin protection)
- **Thin** the foliage on grapevines to allow more sun and air into the vines, which will help to reduce the risk of disease developing
- **Plant** seedlings of brussels sprouts into rich, well-limed soil (it's a bit late now for seeds)
- **Preserve** excess herbs growing in the garden by hanging bunches upside down in a dry, airy spot (*see Hannah Moloney's tips, page 56*)

## TRY DIFFERENT vegies

top tip

**If you're in the habit of growing the same vegies each year, why not make a vow to grow something different when planning your autumn and winter crops this year. Perhaps try Japanese turnips instead of the regular ones, pink- or red-seeded broad beans, celeriac, sea kale or any leafy Asian greens that can add interest to stir-fries.**

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Celeriac; Japanese turnips; broad bean plant and seeds; sea kale.

## tame your PLUMBAGO

Plumbago loves the warmer weather and has maximum growth in late summer – turn your back for a couple of weeks and it will attempt to take over the entire garden. Not only does this plant clump up and spread underground, it also grabs onto nearby trees and shrubs, and uses them to pull itself up into the heights. The best way to keep plumbago under control is to take a firm hand and trim it back by about half in early February. Sprinkle slow-release fertiliser pellets around the base of the plant, keep it well watered, and in just a few weeks your plumbago will be back in flower. Make a calendar note, too, to cut the plants down to ground level at the end of winter.

**PHOTOS** NATALIE MENDHAM, ISTOCK

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## In the tropics

- **Plant** Richmond birdwing butterfly vines (*Pararistolochia praevenosa* and *P. laheyana*) to support the population of native birdwing butterflies (*above*), but avoid the similar Dutchman's pipe plants (*Aristolochia* spp.), as they are poisonous to the butterfly larvae
- **Propagate** desert rose by taking tip cuttings and then allowing them to dry for a few weeks before planting them into a sandy mix
- **Mow** and feed lawns regularly, especially if heavy rains have washed away earlier applications of fertiliser
- **Prune** passionfruit vines back by about two thirds after the main cropping has finished
- **Plant** cocoyams and arrowroot into moist, but not boggy, soil
- **Take** suckers from pineapples and plant them 20cm apart directly into well-prepared soil
- **Get ready** for planting season by preparing vegie beds and hunting through catalogues for new varieties
- **Plant** tropical leafy greens such as aibika (*Abelmoschus manihot*), Ceylon spinach (*Basella alba*), kang kong (*Ipomoea aquatica*) and sweet leaf (*Breynia androgyna* syn. *Sauropus androgynus*)
- **Fill** pots and baskets with colourful plants such as bromeliads, coleus, New Guinea impatiens and torenia, and use them to add some colour to gloomy parts of the garden
- **Pull out** leafy weeds, remove any seed heads, then chop up the remainder of the weeds and add them to the compost heap

**TOP JOB**

## DEADHEAD AGAPANTHUS

Agapanthus plants are widely grown because of their toughness and their cheery summer flowers, but they have a major downside. Their seeds will spread into nearby bushland, and the old flower stems look ugly when they're left on the plants. Avoid these problems by cutting off the stems at the base once their blooms have finished. When buying new aggies, hunt out some of the low-seeding varieties that are now available.

## choose a LIVING GIFT FOR YOUR VALENTINE

Give your valentine the long-lasting gift of a perfumed plant such as a potted red rose, gardenia, dwarf lemon, frangipani, lavender or another scented favourite. Foodie valentines will appreciate a pot of fragrant culinary herbs such as basil, rosemary or oregano. Rosemary is a particularly apt herb choice because it's the traditional symbol of love, fidelity and remembrance.

top tips

## USE SOLAR POWER AGAINST PESTS

The most effective way to destroy pest- and disease-riddled flowers, fruit or leaves is to seal them inside a plastic bag and leave the bag to 'cook', or solarise, in the sun. After a few weeks, the offending pieces will have reduced in size and can go into the bin where they will no longer spread the problem.

## CHILL YOUR ORCHIDS

Encourage flower initiation in cymbidium orchids for their winter display by dropping a few ice cubes around the base of the clump every week.

**PHOTOS** SHUTTERSTOCK, ISTOCK, GAP PHOTOS

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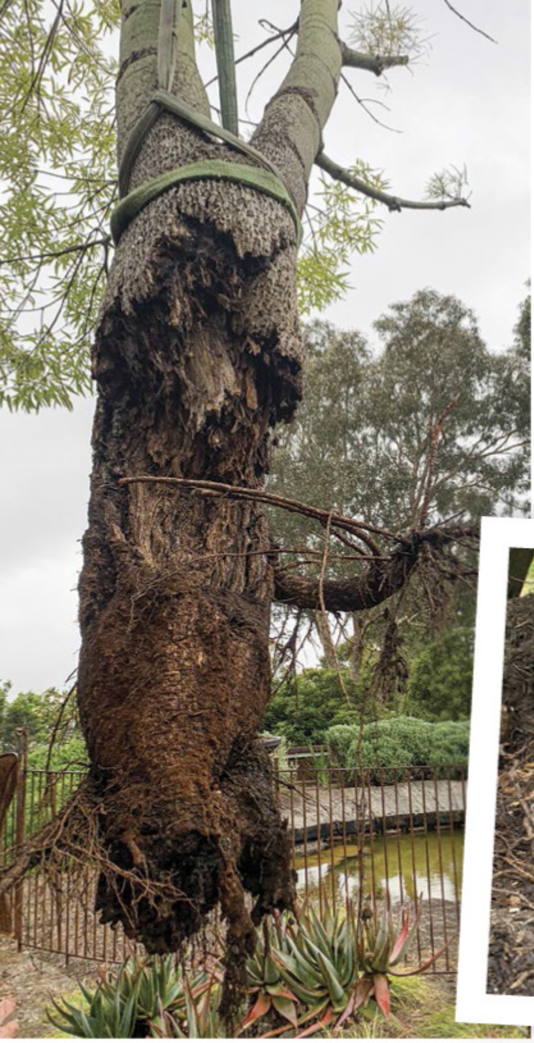
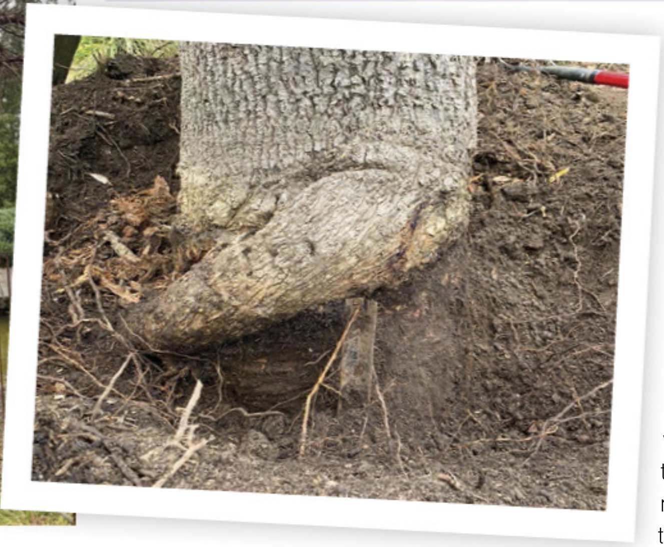


# MAILBOX



**Q** **Can you please advise me on my sick Queensland bottle tree (*Brachychiton rupestris*) and whether I'll be able to save it? I planted it 25 years ago, at 2m tall, into a raised bed, using beautiful friable soil. It was growing well and the girth of the trunk doubled in size. Then, about three years ago, one side of the tree seemed to die but occasionally grew leaves. This year, the whole tree started leaning, and when I examined the trunk, I noticed the rot. We dug it up and, although the soil in the hole wasn't wet, the tree had hardly any roots.**
*Loretta Childs, Christmas Hills, Vic*

**ANGUS STEWART SAYS** The excessive moisture that the Australian east coast has been receiving over the past few years has meant that even well-drained soils have had lots of moisture hanging around for lengthy periods of time, creating the perfect conditions for fungal and bacterial growth. Some of these microbes feed on dead tissue such as rotting wood, while others are plant pathogens that cause diseases such as root rot. Plants have a great capacity to survive the activity of these organisms, as we can see in your bottle tree. Replant the tree into well-drained soil in a new spot, as the pathogen will be in the old soil. Apply a soil drench of a relatively low-toxicity fungicide based on phosphorous (phosphonic) acid that is routinely used in horticulture to stimulate plants' natural defence mechanisms. Check the label for the application rate.

**Q** **Are glazed pots better than unglazed ones for using indoors and outdoors? I have an old unglazed terracotta pot that has grown some moss on the outside and I don't know if it's okay for planting.**
*Margaret Dwyer, Goulburn, NSW*

**AB BISHOP SAYS** There are pros and cons to using unglazed or unsealed pots. An unsealed pot's surface draws moisture from the potting mix, which is handy if indoor plants are overwatered. It also allows for better aeration around the roots. If using unglazed pots indoors, sit them on plastic saucers or trays to protect your floor and furniture. Unglazed small pots and outdoor pots need monitoring more regularly than glazed pots, as they dry out very quickly (especially without a saucer). Plants that grow in an unsealed pot for a year or more can be difficult to remove, as roots often start working their way into the sides of the pot. Also, unsealed pots stain more easily, but they develop an attractive patina over time. It's perfectly fine for you to plant into your moss-covered terracotta pot (people pay good money for them!) and the moss will essentially help to 'seal' the pot.

## NIGHT DELIGHT

The last thing I do before bedtime is take my dog, Spotty, for a walk along my garden path (*above*). What unfolds before me are beautiful scenes lit by my small LED lantern, displaying the night garden, with its hidden charms, emerging from the darkness. Something so simple but surprisingly delightful.
*Elizabeth Broadbent, Newcastle, NSW*

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**Penelope Lowery from Gilmore in the ACT has won a six-month subscription to ABC *Gardening Australia* magazine for sharing how she protected her garlic crop from the challenging weather, with great results.**

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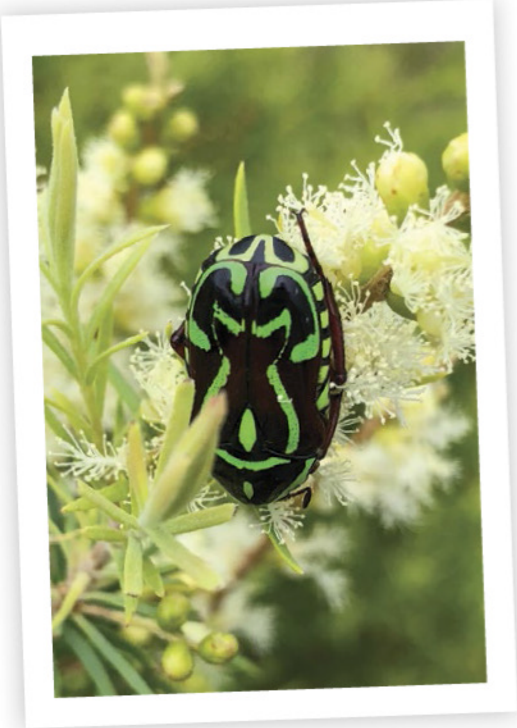


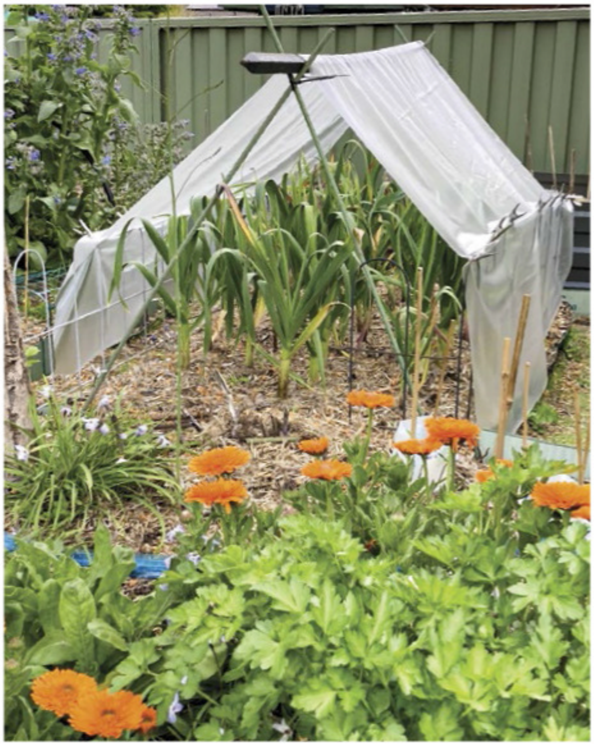
**Q** **I took this pic of this beautiful beetle on a native *Melaleuca* 'Snowstorm' shrub in my garden. Can you please identify it for me?** *Margaret Grills, Innes Park, Qld*

**MARTYN ROBINSON SAYS** This is a fiddler beetle (*Eupoecila australasiae*), one of the flower scarabs. It feeds on pollen and nectar, like a bee, and probably helps pollinate a number of plants. Interestingly, the larvae are one of the curl grubs you often find in plant pots, and sometimes even bags of potting mix. They do little harm in the garden, but if the potting mix in your pots looks churned up, tip it all out, toss the grubs into the garden, then replant everything. The plant will soon recover. The grubs mainly eat decomposing plant material in the soil, but they can run out of this in a plant pot and start on the roots instead!

The colourful adults get their common name from the markings on their back, which resemble the 'f' holes on a violin. These markings can vary from green to yellow. Unlike many other Australian beetles, they are active by day. If you want to attract them, plant the low-growing Australian native dwarf apple gum (*Angophora hispida*). Then you can watch them, and some of their equally colourful relatives, at eye level.

## Your Insta posts

Clockwise from top left: **charlies.patch** says that nothing beats a rainbow chard harvest, and **organicurbangardener** is happy to finally see some colour on these ripening tomatoes. Meanwhile, **photos_by_snoddy** captured this gorgeous shot of a bee feasting on yellow flowers, and **raes.a.dozen.daisies** found this monarch butterfly resting on a pink buddleja in the garden one morning.

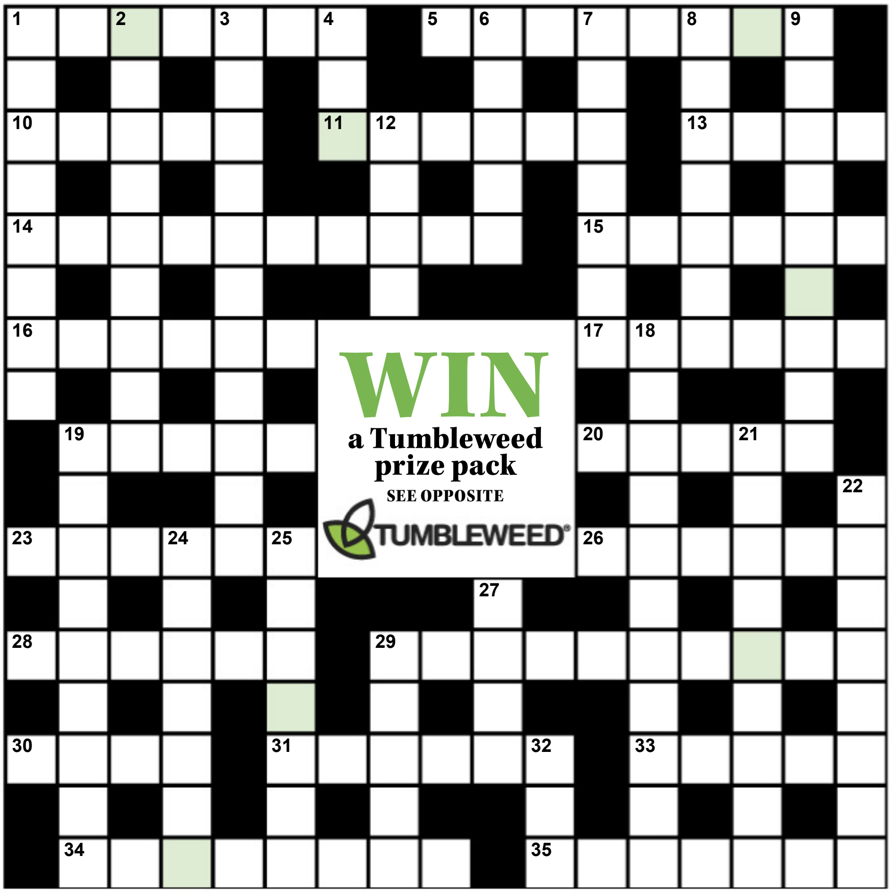


## WEATHERING THE STORM

In a bid to beat La Niña, when my garlic was ready to dry out, I constructed a ridge tent using stakes, cable ties and plastic sheeting pegged to the garden edging. I eventually harvested some of the biggest bulbs I've ever grown. *Penelope Lowery, Gilmore, ACT*

# take a break!

Put the kettle on – it's time to relax! Solve our puzzle to be in the running to win a Tumbleweed Cube prize pack



157 SOLUTION NEXT MONTH

## across

**1.** Edible gourd with thick rind (7)
**5.** North American tree that is the source of satin walnut timber (5,3)
**10.** Program that is broadcast again (5)
**11.** New Zealand lemonwood tree (6)
**13.** Limp, straggling (4)
**14.** Wattle that impedes (4-1-5)
**15.** Salad plant *Eruca vesicaria* (6)
**16.** The Angels' singer, Bernard 'Doc' ... (6)
**17.** Dividing membrane in the nose (6)
**19.** Stem of a mushroom (5)
**20.** Adult human female (5)
**23.** Celebrity, fame (6)
**26.** Maori name for hopbush (6)
**28.** Most strange (6)
**29.** *Ranunculus auricomus* or ... buttercup (10)
**30.** European wild cherry (4)
**31.** *Phaseolus coccineus* or ... bean (6)
**33.** Earth, land (5)
**34.** Having no foliage (8)
**35.** (Of a leaf) having toothed edges (7)

## down

**1.** Beverage originating in Portugal (4,4)
**2.** Fun, jollity (9)
**3.** Floral emblem of Western Australia (8,3) **(Picture A)**
**4.** Fruit consisting of a hard shell around an edible kernel (3)
**6.** See 27 down
**7.** Mainly south-eastern Australian plant with brilliant tubular flowers (7) **(Picture B)**
**8.** The mushroom *Psilocybe cubensis* (4,3)
**9.** Dummy figure used for display in shop windows (9)
**12.** The upper angle between a leaf and its stem (4)
**18.** Exterior protective shell of some animals (11)
**19.** This plant of genus *Veronica* (9) **(Picture C)**
**21.** Genus of monkey puzzle tree (9)
**22.** Venomous marine reptile (3,5)
**24.** The islands of the Pacific and adjacent seas (7)
**25.** Pure, unprocessed (7)
**27 & 6.** The largest mammal (4,5)
**29.** Taxonomic grouping (5)
**32.** Purplish vegetable, ... cabbage (3)

CROSSWORD COMPILED BY STEVE BALL **PHOTOS** ISTOCK

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## how to enter

We have two Tumbleweed Cube prize packs, each valued at $229.50, to give away. To enter, unscramble the highlighted letters in the crossword (*opposite*), and email your answer to comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au by February 5. Put 'Tumbleweed Prize Pack' in the subject line, and include your name, street address, email and daytime phone number.

## WINNERS

**Rake Broom Set (November 22)** M Adams, Miners Rest, Vic; M Boardman, Mount Gambier, SA; J Hunt, Alfred Cove, WA; K Kemp, Bar Beach, NSW; A Spina, Windsor, Qld. **Koshi Wind Chimes (November 22)** A Dalton-Winks, Woodside, SA; J Fitzgerald, Manjimup, WA; L Gray, Elanora, Qld; S Miskin, Leda, WA; L Ryan, Dugandan, Qld.

## solution

**January 2023 crossword**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | E | L | O | P | E | A | ■ | P | O | P | P | I | E | S | ■ | ■ |
| O | ■ | E | ■ | O | ■ | T | ■ | A | ■ | R | ■ | R | ■ | T | ■ | P |
| G | L | A | D | I | O | L | U | S | ■ | U | T | E | R | I | N | E |
| S | ■ | C | ■ | S | ■ | A | ■ | T | ■ | N | ■ | S | ■ | L | ■ | S |
| ■ | S | H | O | O | T | S | ■ | E | Y | E | F | I | L | L | E | T |
| ■ | ■ | E | ■ | N | ■ | ■ | ■ | L | ■ | ■ | ■ | N | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| R | U | S | T | I | C | | | | | | C | E | N | S | U | S |
| E | ■ | ■ | ■ | V | ■ | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | E | ■ | E |
| C | O | C | C | Y | X | | | | | | I | S | L | A | N | D |
| U | ■ | O | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | ■ | T | ■ | ■ | ■ | U |
| R | A | W | E | S | T | | | | | | L | O | G | J | A | M |
| ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | U | ■ | ■ | ■ | S | ■ | ■ | ■ | N | ■ | U | ■ | ■ |
| A | L | P | I | N | E | A | S | H | ■ | H | O | E | I | N | G | ■ |
| C | ■ | E | ■ | D | ■ | L | ■ | A | ■ | O | ■ | C | ■ | I | ■ | R |
| I | N | K | W | E | E | D | ■ | D | E | S | E | R | T | P | E | A |
| D | ■ | O | ■ | W | ■ | E | ■ | E | ■ | T | ■ | O | ■ | E | ■ | I |
| ■ | ■ | E | N | S | U | R | E | D | ■ | A | S | P | I | R | I | N |

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**January's unscrambled word:** decompose

CROSSWORD COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS: OPEN TO AUSTRALIAN RESIDENTS ONLY. COMPETITION OPENS 16/01/23 AT 00:01 (AEDT) AND CLOSES 05/02/23 AT 23:59 (AEDT). TWO LUCKY WINNERS WILL RECEIVE A TUMBLEWEED CUBE PRIZE PACK, VALUED AT $229.50. TOTAL PRIZE POOL VALUE IS $459.00. WINNER DRAWN ON 07/02/23 AT 14:00 (AEDT) AT NEXTMEDIA, 205 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 2065. WINNERS NOTIFIED BY TELEPHONE AND IN WRITING. PERMIT NUMBERS: NSW TP/01427, ACT TP 21/02081. FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS AT GARDENINGAUSTRALIA.COM.AU. PRIVACY POLICY AVAILABLE AT NEXTMEDIA.COM.AU. PROMOTER IS NEXTMEDIA PTY LTD; ABN 84 128 805 970; 205 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ST LEONARDS NSW 2065.

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## TV

*Gardening Australia* is on ABC TV every Friday at 7.30pm, and repeated on Sunday at 1.30pm and on ABC iview.

Costa (pictured here proudly holding the AACTA award for the Best Lifestyle Program!) and the rest of the *Gardening Australia* team will be back on your TV screens on February 10. This is the show's 34th year, and the very first episode for 2023 sees the whole team together in the beautiful Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria. It will also be the unveiling of the program's brand new look. So tune in for another great year of beautiful gardens, inspiration and practical information!

### in the February 10 episode...

**Costa Georgiadis** discovers how a botanic garden is adapting plant collections so they can withstand a changing climate, **Millie Ross** is pruning, pest-proofing and planting to get ready for cooler weather, **Clarence Slockee** and **Hannah Moloney** learn from an Indigenous educator about cultural and ecological history in the landscape, **Tammy Huynh** shows how easy it is to propagate dragon fruit in pots, and we meet a pharmacist who's an internationally recognised cultivator of *Cymbidium* orchids.

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- Missed an episode or two of *Gardening Australia*? You can catch up on ABC iview at any time **iview.abc.net.au**
- Head to our website to watch individual stories and read our fact sheets, where we list every plant that appears in each episode **abc.net.au/gardening**
- We also have our own YouTube channel: **youtube.com/GardeningAustralia**

# radio

Tune into your local ABC radio for gardening advice from the experts. See times below. For more details about coverage in your area, phone 139 994 or visit reception.abc.net.au.

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## NSW

**ABC Radio Sydney**
Saturday 9am
**ABC Radio Central Coast**
Saturday 9am
**ABC Central West**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Illawarra**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Mid North Coast; ABC Coffs Coast**
Saturday 9.30am, Thursday 9.30am
**ABC Newcastle**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC New England North West**
Saturday 8.30am, Thursday 9.30am
**ABC North Coast**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Riverina**
Saturday 8.30am, Tuesday 9.35am
**ABC South East**
Wednesday 10am, Saturday 9am
**ABC Western Plains**
Thursday 9.35am fortnightly, Saturday 8.30am

## NT

**ABC Darwin & ABC Katherine**
Saturday 9am
**ABC Alice Springs; ABC Tennant Creek**
Saturday 8.30am

## QLD

**ABC Radio Brisbane**
Saturday 6am
**ABC Gold Coast**
Saturday 9am
**ABC Sunshine Coast**
Thursday 10.30am, Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Southern Queensland**
Saturday 9am
**ABC North Queensland**
Friday 10am
**ABC Tropical North; ABC Capricornia; ABC Wide Bay; ABC North West Qld; ABC Western Qld**
Friday 10am
**ABC Far North**
Friday 10am, Saturday 7.30am

## ACT

**ABC Radio Canberra**
Saturday 8.30am

## SA

**ABC Radio Adelaide; ABC North & West; ABC Eyre Peninsula; ABC South East SA**
Saturday 8.30am
**ABC Riverland**
Saturday 7am
**ABC Broken Hill**
Saturday 9am
**Statewide; ABC Radio Adelaide; ABC North & West; ABC Eyre Peninsula; ABC South East; ABC Riverland; ABC Broken Hill**
Sunday 11am

## TAS

**ABC Radio Hobart; ABC Northern Tasmania**
Saturday 9am

## VIC

**ABC Radio Melbourne**
Saturday 9.15am
**ABC Victoria**
Monday 9.40am
**ABC Southwest Victoria**
Thursday 7.20am fortnightly

## WA

**ABC Radio Perth; ABC Great Southern; ABC South West; ABC Goldfields Esperance; ABC Kimberley; ABC Pilbara; ABC Midwest and Wheatbelt**
Tuesday 2.15pm, Saturday 9.05am

listen

Download the *ABC listen* app and listen to live radio streams of gardening programs across Australia.

PHOTO SUPPLIED BY THE ABC **THIS INFORMATION IS CORRECT AT THE TIME OF PRINTING BUT IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.**

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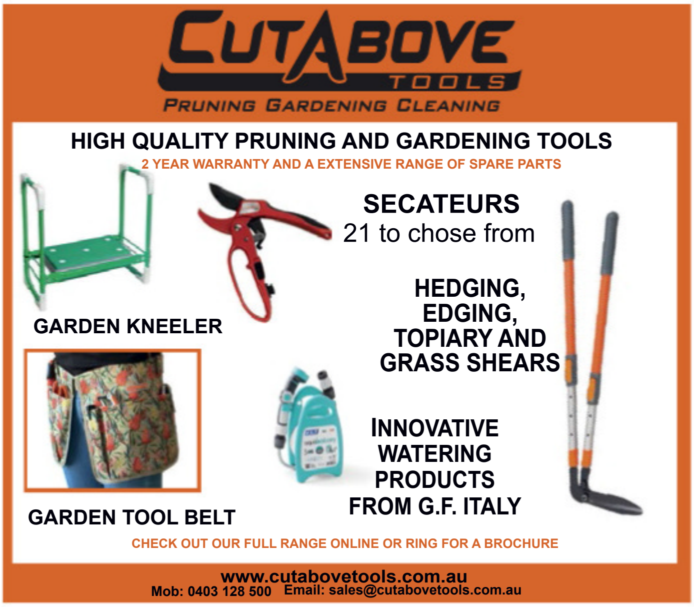

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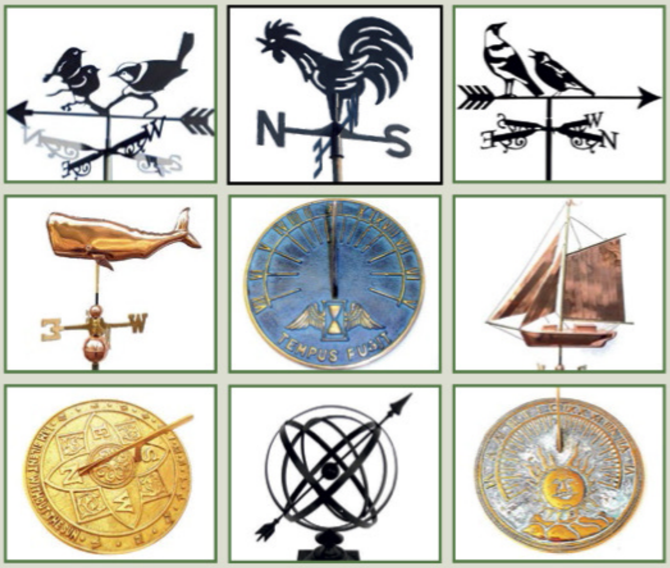

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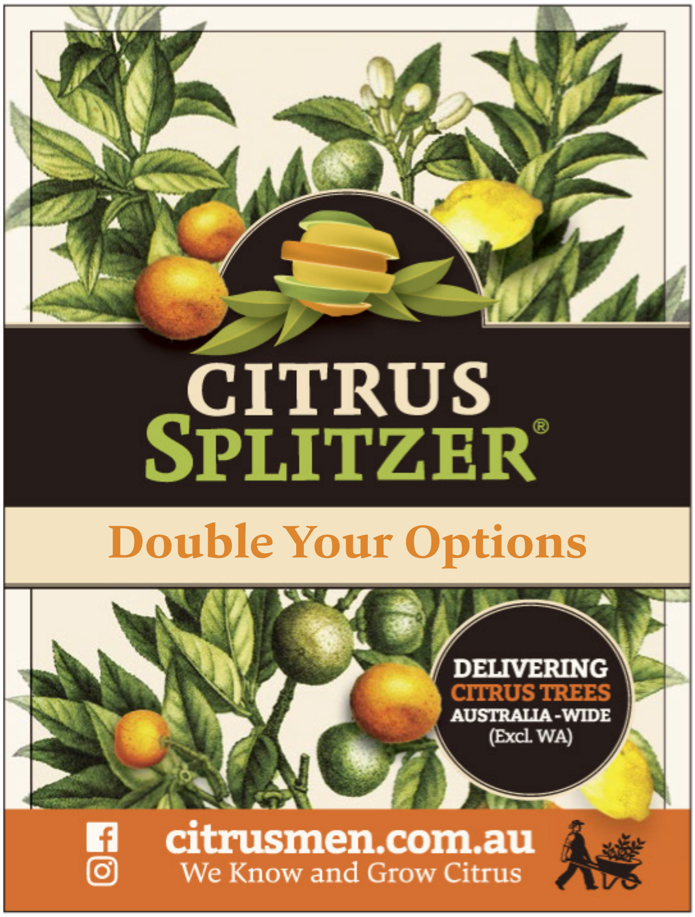

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# the big picture

While evergreens are beautiful and provide welcome shade in the heat, it's deciduous trees that really shine in a cool-climate garden, writes **MICHAEL McCOY**

A few weeks back, I was lounging under a New Zealand Christmas bush (*Metrosideros excelsa*) on the beachfront in Lorne, Victoria. I was trying to work out if the contrast with the deep shade from which I viewed it made the water look bluer and more irresistibly sparkly than when standing in the full sun, or whether it was only my imagination.

The tree was a perfect specimen of its type, with a dense umbrella of thick leathery leaves in rude health held aloft by multiple trunks. But as I sat there, blessing the tree, blessing the person who chose to plant it and, in an outpouring of feel-goodness, blessing every passer-by, I knew it wasn't a tree I'd welcome into my own garden.

Where I live is a few degrees cooler in both summer and winter maximums than those on most of the Victorian coast, and probably quite a lot cooler than what most of you experience. And while I don't have a beef with the depth of cold that we get here in Woodend, Victoria, I'm perpetually indignant about how long that cold lasts. Somewhere in there – in the difference between a coastal climate and my mountain one – there's a tipping point in which I know I don't really want any evergreen canopy in my garden.

Not only do evergreen trees cast shade all year, their leaves are nearly always tougher, thicker and more opaque than those on deciduous trees. This isn't surprising, when you consider that a leaf on a deciduous tree only needs to last eight months at the absolute longest, while those on an evergreen tree may be required to deliver three-or-so years of service. In brilliant sunshine, this depth and darkness is exactly what's called for. In my climate, with less sun and a much softer light, my leaning is towards a canopy of semi-transparency and buoyancy that only deciduous trees are able to provide.

I absolutely love the coastal work of Australian designers like Fiona Brockhoff, Peter Shaw and Myles Baldwin, in which smaller evergreen trees such as moonahs, tea-trees and smaller gums are sculpted with raised canopies over twisted, sinuous trunks. So much so that I think I'm destined to be engaged in a permanent internal war about where I would rather live and garden. But while I'm here, I know that my canopy will remain almost entirely deciduous.

It's curious and delightful (and only slightly annoying) that gardens only a couple of hours' drive apart should call for such different treatment. But it's the consequent diversity that makes gardens and gardening in this country so infinitely interesting. *Vive la différence*!

**Michael blogs at thegardenist.com.au**

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